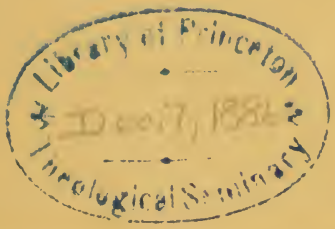

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TRUMPET CALLS

TO

CHRISTIAN ENERGY.

TRUMPET CALLS

TO

CHRISTIAN ENERGY:

BEING

A Collection of Sermons

PREACHED

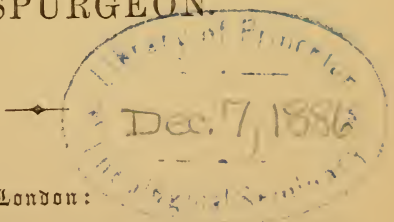
ON SUNDAY AND THURSDAY EVENINGS

AT THE

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS volume is issued as a sequel to "TYPES AND EMBLEMS." It is the second of the series, and contains a selection of Sermons all addressed with one particular aim, *to arouse the energy and direct the efforts of Christian workers*. The fact that months, and even years in some cases, intervened between their delivery, may tend rather to enhance than to detract from their present interest. By such persistent endeavours to stimulate the enterprise and develop the talents of Church members, the Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle has enlisted a noble army of valiant labourers, and banded them together in various societies; training them to handle *the Sword* and to use *the Trowel* for the defence of the Gospel, and the building up of the Church. Our readers will find here a fair sample of the appeals and persuasives by which a continuous succession of fresh volunteers has been recruited into the Home Mission service. Although no special order has been observed in the arrangement of these Sermons, the first and the last each tells its own story. The one was *a cry for Revival*, before the manifold agencies now so vigorously carried forward had been brought into operation; the other was *a solemn reflection* prompted by the closing Sabbath of the past year, when the visit of the American Evangelists to our Metropolis was in prospect.

That the blessing which attended the preaching may continue to follow the circulation of these Sermons is the earnest hope of—

THE PUBLISHERS.

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An Exciting Enquiry.

"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"—Matthew xxi. 10.

OH, that something would move this great city of ours! I am afraid that at least one-third of our population is settling down in stolid indifference to all religion. It is not that there are thousands of professed infidels, but without making the profession of being so, infidels they really are. It is not that they hate the gospel—they do not care to hear it, or to know what it teaches. They have not enough interest in it to enter the sanctuary even for once in their lives, unless influenced by fashion or by fear they may attend some ceremonial observance. I think we can hardly form a conception of the fearful heathenism of this great metropolis. You might go down street after street and find that the larger proportion of the people, so far from making any profession of religion, did not even enter a place of worship, and knew nothing more than what the city missionary or the Bible-woman may have been helped to teach them! We are getting into a very, very, very sad state of things; we want

something or other that will get *at* the masses, and constrain the city to be moved. The theatre services which have been lately attempted have no doubt proved a great blessing; the opening of cathedrals was a step in the right direction; but everybody can see that the effect of such departure from the ordinary routine is naturally transient. There will be no greater attraction in a theatre than there will be in a chapel or church, if the same gospel is preached, after the novelty of its having been preached there shall have worn off. We can no more expect to see cathedrals crowded long together now than we might have expected it twenty years ago. The thing is good as an expedient, but it must be temporary in its results. We shall want something greater than this before we shall get at the masses of London. This is only, as it were, a little hammer; we want a hammer more massive than that of Thor to strike this island, to make it shake from end to end. When you have three millions of people herded together you are not to move them by simply opening half-a-dozen theatres, or by crowding a cathedral, or by filling some large place of worship. What a hopeful sign it would be, even if people were excited against religion! Really I would sooner that they intelligently hated it than that they were stolidly indifferent to it. A man who has got enough thought about him to oppose the truth of God is a more hopeful subject for ministry than the man who does not think at all. We cannot get on with logs; we feel that we could brace up our nerves to the charge amidst men possessed with devils, while we have the gospel to cast the devils out. It is when men have no spirit at all, but are simply dull,

lumpish, thoughtless logs, we cannot get on with them. For my part, I do not regret the activity of Puseyism and of Popery just now. Though I dread it as an awful evil in itself, I am thankful for everything that will relieve the awful stillness of religious stagnation. If it will only stir us up to oppose it, if it will only make the true Protestant spirit of England come out, I shall be grateful for the sanitary results, however much I deplore the devastating pestilence. We want something that shall again rouse this city, and move it from end to end. The text seems to me to tell us what will do it. Question!—What is that which will stir the whole of London, as it stirred Jerusalem? Answer!—A reigning Saviour riding in triumph. Jesus Christ never moved Jerusalem till he mounted on that ass, till they cast their garments in the pathway, and strewed the branches, and cried, "Hosannah!" Then it was, as he rode in triumph King of the Jews, that the city was stirred. O that we had a reigning Saviour more distinctly recognised in all our churches! There is no use in mincing matters or hiding our shame. The shout of a King is not in the midst of the church at large. The ancient glory which rested upon the Lord's chosen has in a great measure departed. "Write ye Ichabod, for the glory is departed." We have not now the lighting down of the mighty arm, nor the strength of a present God, as once we had. The world knows very little about the church, and cares very little about her, so long as Christ does not reign in her palaces. Unfurl the flag, proclaim his entry, make known his residence, and forthwith "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against

the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." What was that church which disturbed the dark ages? Why, a church made up of men who hazarded their lives unto the death—men who stood up and preached in the dead of night to the few who were bold enough to gather to hear them—men who at other times could beard the tyrant, and stand face to face with cardinal or pope, and speak the truth, come what would. These were men who had a reigning Saviour in their midst; yet, few and feeble, that gallant host subdued the world; the Vatican trembled; the words they spake, sustained by the character they bore, fell like thunderbolts about it. Would you enquire, my brethren, for the simple but saintly servants of God who brought a Reformation into England. They were men who recognised a reigning Saviour. The church was represented by those in whose hearts Jesus Christ really did dwell—such men as Wycliffe and his successors. From market-place to market-place they went, with but half pages or whole pages of the Word of God, as fast as they could be printed; they read them at the market-cross; they went on from place to place, preaching the pure, unadulterated gospel, in homely language, with fiery tongues, and soon they set all England in a blaze. And who were they in later days, in the last century, who awoke the slumbering church? They were men who had Christ reigning in them; such men as Whitfield and the Wesleys—men who bowed before the dignity of Jesus, and said—

> "Shall we, for fear of feeble men,
> The Spirit's course in us restrain?"

Awed by no mortal's frown, would they smooth their tongues and fashion their words to win human esteem? On the hill-tops, in the churchyards, by the road-sides, anywhere, everywhere, they unfurled the banner of a reigning Saviour, and straightway the darkness of England gave place to glorious light. And now, could we only get the church of God to awake, we should soon have the whole city moved. Let our ministers preach the gospel, or let them preach it with something like force; instead of treating us to moral essays and elaborately-prepared discourses, let them speak their hearts out in such words as God would give them on the occasion: let the members of the church back them up by vehement zeal, earnest prayer, and incessant labours; we should want nothing else to stir this city from end to end. Oh! to see the Saviour riding in the midst, and to hear the acclamations, while joyous converts shout, like the young children of old, "Hosannah. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" The old attractions of the cross have not departed. You cannot preach Christ and not get a congregation. Be it "the Christ" whom ye preach honestly and preach fully, the people must come to hear. Though they hate it and loathe it, they will come again; they will turn on their heel, and say, "We cannot bear it;" but the next time the doors are opened they will be there. The gospel gets them by the ear and holds them. It has a secret mysterious influence even over the hearts that do not receive it, to compel them at least to lend their ear to the hearing of it. Let the church, then, awake; and that influence shall be had whereby the city shall be moved.

But when we speak of the church, I am afraid we often hide our own sins under a declaration against the church. Why, *we* are the church. Christian men and women, *you* are the church. You must not tie the church up like a quivering victim, and lash her; tie yourself up, and let the lash fall on your own shoulders. If you and I had a reigning Christ in our hearts, we should help to move the city. Do you ask what I mean by that? I do not mean the way in which some of you show the quality of your faith by the quantity of its fruits. Your convictions and your conversion assume a very mild form. You keep them well in check; you have got a tight rein on the motions of the heart; your religion never runs wild—never! you are such a prudent brother; *you* will never be guilty of anything like enthusiasm: no one will ever chalk the word "Fanatic" on your back. You will never move the city, my friend—no fear of it. While appeals which ought to make your heart burn freeze on your ears, you will never move the city. While themes which ought to bow you to the earth in humility of spirit, and then lift you up as on eagles' wings in rapture of delight, affect you not at all;—unimpressible as stone, you will never move the city. But if you and I felt that the things we believed were of the first and last importance, that they were worth living for, and worth dying for, that there was nothing else, in fact, in all the world that was worth any care or thought except these things, then, beloved, we should soon see the city moved. One earnest Christian fully given up to his Master, one soul perfectly devoted to Christ, is of more worth in soul-winning and in world-conquering

than fifty thousand of the mere professors. You know how it used to be in the olden wars. The rank and file all did service in their way; but it was the one man—the one man who made the corner of the triangle to break the enemy's ranks, and gathered all the spears into his own bosom—it was *he* that won the victory. The man who dashed foremost with his battle-axe and slew the foe, and gave courage to all the trembling ones behind—the man who told them that victory was sure to wait on courage, and who dashed on against fearful odds—he was the man who made his country famous. And such Christians we want now-a-days, who know not fear, do not believe in defeat, and are animated with the assurance that the Most High God is with us. Go on, and on, and on, conquering and to conquer.

You see it is a *reigning* Christ that moves the city—Christ riding in the heart in glorious possession of gladsome acclamation—it is this that will be the great thing to stir even London's stolid masses.

The great multitude, when stirred, will ask the question, "Who is this?" and it will be an unfortunate thing if you that are with Christ should not be able to give an answer. Some of you whose hearts are, I hope, right, are scarcely attentive enough to that precept, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and with fear." I do deprecate above all things your getting your creed from me —your building your creed upon the fact that the preacher has said so and so. We want Bible students as Christians—men who not only believe the truth but have good reason for believing it, who can

meet error with the argument of "It is written," and can maintain the truth at all hazards, using weapons taken from the armoury of God's inspired book. O that we had among us more who were fit to be teachers; but, alas! I am afraid we shall have to say of many amongst you, as Paul said of the weak ones in his day, that when they ought to be teachers they were still only learners; and when they should be breaking the bread of life to others, they were still needing to be fed upon milk. I hope that will not be the case with us. May we grow in grace; so that when the question is asked, "Who is this?" we may be able to answer it.

Beloved, is it your desire to do good to your fellow-men? Have you a longing in your soul to be the means of bringing others to Christ? In order to accomplish this, it is imperatively necessary that you should have a knowledge of Jesus. Let it be a heart knowledge. You tell your children sometimes to learn their lessons by heart. You cannot learn Christ in any other way. Christ cannot be learned in the head. Love only can learn love; and Christ is love incarnate. It is by loving him, and communing with him, that you will get to understand him. You must learn him by heart. Then you must learn him experimentally. I would not give ought for an answer to my anxious enquiries from a mere theoretical person. Could I not read the book and get at the theory myself? I want to be taught by one who has tasted and handled of the things of which he speaks. Dear brethren in Christ, seek to know Jesus by living upon him. Drink ye of his blood; eat ye of his flesh; be you in constant communion with him, till your vital union with his person shall transcend

your faith by a constant joyful experience. Know Christ experimentally. Endeavour also to know Christ, beloved, by being taught of his Spirit. That learning of Christ that we get from human wit is of little worth; it is the revelation of Christ in us by the Holy Ghost which alone is true knowledge. John Bunyan used to say that he preached only such truths as the Lord had burnt into him. Oh, may he burn these truths into you! May he be pleased to write upon the tablets of your heart the story of your Master, so that when any shall say, "Who is this?" you may not need to pause for a single moment, or to ask any divine to assist you in the answer,

"But gladly tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour you have found."

This enquiry about Christ should always be met with a clear and distinct answer. If I had only one more sermon to preach before I died, I know what it should be about: it should be about my Lord Jesus Christ; and I think that when we get to the end of our ministry, one of our regrets will be, that we did not preach more of him. I am sure no minister will ever repent of having preached him too much. You that are with Jesus, talk much about him, and let that talk be very plain. Tell sinners that "God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and his disciples beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Tell them that he came on earth as a substitute for his people; that his holy life is their righteousness; that his sufferings and death constitute an atonement, and appease the wrath of God for all their sins. Never let an opportunity be lost of telling

out the doctrine of substitution. That is the core of the gospel; Christ for sinners—the sinner in Christ's place, and Christ in the sinner's place; debts paid by proxy; the chastisement of our peace laid upon him, that we may have the peace through his chastisement. I wish to put this matter very earnestly to my dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, and especially to you who are in church-fellowship here. Do on every occasion, and especially when you get but half an invitation so to do—do speak out concerning the person of Christ as God and man, concerning the work of Christ as taking human guilt and suffering for it, concerning the worth of that work as being able to take away all manner of sin and blasphemy. Tell it to the very chief of sinners, that the blood of Christ can make them clean; tell it to the drunkard, the harlot, the thief, the murderer. Tell them all that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned; and never, from fear or through shame, refuse to give an answer to so hopeful an enquiry as this—"Who is this?"

And what shall I say to you who are moved by curiosity to ask this question—"Who is this?" I dare say there were some in Jerusalem who were so busy with their shops that they did not enquire, "Who is this?" "Oh!" they would say, "I need not go across the threshold to attend to what a mob may be doing in the street—a lot of children calling out 'Hosannah,' and a number of idle gossips following a silly fellow as he rides upon an ass through the street; that is all it is." Other people doubtless had a little of the bump of curiosity; they could not help enquiring, so they come into the street, they stand in the crowd, and they

say to one, "Who is this?" "I don't know," says one; "I am come to see myself." "But who is this?" They repeat the question again and again; and they very likely get six wrong answers before they get the right. They push on, and at last they get a good standing-place—perhaps climb up into a tree, as Zaccheus did; and there they are, all wide awake, trying to get an answer to the question, "Who is this?" Well, I hope some such sort of curiosity as this may be in your mind; at any rate, I had it in my mind once, and I believe there are many that have it. I will tell you the occasions upon which this curiosity is often excited. A labouring man has been in the habit of working with another who was often intoxicated, an habitual swearer, and perhaps even prone at times to blaspheme. On a sudden he sees him a changed character, steady in all his conduct, affectionate, and thoughtful of his wife and children, industrious, and withal he is religious. What an alteration! Can it fail to cause enquiry? Or he calls in at the house of a neighbour, and finds that neighbour very sick and ill; he is a working man with a large family, and it would be a very serious thing for him to die and leave those little ones; but he sits up in the bed, and he tells his friend that he has not any care at all about these matters; he has left them all with God; he says, "I used to fret and worry myself, but now, whether I live or die, I leave it with God; I am perfectly resigned to his will; Christ is with me here; I find it

> "'Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
> And know no will but his.'"

"Oh," says the man, "who *is* this?" What can be the

cause? What can be the reason of this? He watches another; he persecutes him, laughs at him, jeers, casts all manner of threats and insinuations at him. He sees him bear it all very quietly; he knows that he cannot tempt him to do what is wrong, though he tries hard to do it; the path of integrity is trodden year after year, and the worldly man looking on cannot make it out. He says, "Who is this?" He sees another—a very happy, lively, earnest, joyful Christian. "Well," thinks this man, "I have to go to the theatre to get any fun; I must be in company, and I must drink a certain quantity before I can get my spirits up; but here is a man cheerful and bright. He is poor, but he is happy; he has got a fustian jacket, but he has not got a fustian heart; he's 'as happy as a king;' his soul is merry within him; I can't make it out—'Who is this?'" These kind of things stir men's curiosity. I hope, dear friends, you will try to make people more and more curious by this plan. And how often a holy dying bed stirs that curiosity! As the expiring believer shouts victory, or sinks to his rest with perfect joy, the worldling looks on and says, "Who *is* this? I can't comprehend it, I can't make it out." Now, it is little wonder, my dear friends, that there should be some curiosity to know about Christ. There ought to be a great deal more. Consider that God himself speaks to you by Christ. Shall God speak, and shall mortal man not care to hear what God says? Shall God speak to me by his dear Son, and shall I have no ear to hear the Divine Word? I ought to be anxious to know it. Christ was spoken of by prophets—Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah—all of them spoke of Christ. Were

there all those testimonies about him, and shall not I care to know of him? When he came upon earth, it was with song of angels, and a new star was launched forth to welcome his birth—have I no curiosity to know of him? I understand that his person is complex, that he is at once God and man—strange, strange person this! do I not wish to know more of him? I find that he died, and that he rose again, and that there is a connection between his dying and rising again, and the forgiveness of our sins and the justification of our souls —do I not want to know about that? Christ has come to solve the most tremendous problem, come to tell us of love beyond the grave, of immortality when corruption shall have done its work—have I no curiosity about this? The bleeding Saviour, hanging on the cross with streaming wounds, says to every man here who has any curiosity in his nature—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me." I commend the curiosity that would make you know more of Jesus. Study this book much. Here you shall see the Saviour's face almost in every page. Frequent those mysteries which speak much of him, and do, oh do press forward till you have got an answer to that question, "Who is this?"

There may be in this house of prayer some who are in positive ignorance, asking the question, "Who is this?" I think we ought not to take it for granted that all our congregation understand the gospel, for they do not. The simple "Believe and live" which God has written so plainly in the Bible, is not understood by a great many. I sometimes get letters from

those who have heard the gospel preached here which astound me. The way in which my correspondents look at things seems conclusive that they have never read the Bible; they imagine that my preaching and everybody else's should be altered, in order to suit some whim and fancy of theirs. The ignorance pointed at in the text was strange; for Christ had lived in Jerusalem, and had been there working miracles, yet the people said, "Who is this?" And Jesus Christ is but the next door to where you live—preached in the very street; you can hear him out of doors if you like, in the ministry of some open-air preacher; the city missionary will tell you about him; there is a Testament to be had for twopence; everybody may know about Jesus Christ; and yet there are a great many who do not know about him. But say, is not ignorance of Jesus Christ in this age wilful? Those who do not know of Jesus Christ now have nobody but themselves to blame. Let me remind you that this is very damaging; you lose by it much joy and comfort here below, besides the risks of the hereafter. Ignorance of Jesus Christ will be fatal to your soul's welfare. You may not know how to read, but if you know Christ you shall "read your title clear to mansions in the skies." It is a bad thing for a man not to know a little of all sciences, but a man may go to heaven well enough if he knows only the science of Christ crucified. Not to know Jesus will shut you out of heaven, though you had all the degrees of all the universities in the world appended to your name. Ignorance of him who is the Saviour of sinners is ignorance of the remedy for your soul's disease—ignorance of the key which unlocks

heaven's gate—ignorance of him who can kindle the lamp of life in the sepulchres of death. Oh, I pray you, if you have been hitherto ignorant of the Saviour, be not satisfied till you know him. And when I speak of ignorance of Christ, I do not mean ignorance of his name, and of the fact that there is such a person;—I refer more especially to that spiritual ignorance which is so common among the best informed. Nine persons out of ten who go to a place of worship do not know the meaning of the Saviour shedding his blood for the remission of sin. If you press them to tell you how it is that Christ saves, they will tell you that he did something or other by which God is able to forgive. Though the grand fact that Christ actually was punished in the room, place, and stead of his chosen people, is a fact as clear in the Scripture as noonday, they do not see it. The doctrine of general redemption—that Christ died for the damned in hell, and suffered the torments of those who afterwards are tormented for ever—seems to me to be detestable, subversive of the whole gospel, and destructive of the only pillar upon which our hopes can be built. Christ stood in the stead of his elect; for them he made a full atonement; for them he so suffered that not a sin of theirs shall ever be laid at their door. As the Father's love embraced them, so the death of his Son reconciled them. And who are these that are thus redeemed from among men? They are those who believe in Jesus Christ. This definition is not more simple than conclusive to those to whom the work of the Spirit of God is intelligible. If you do put your trust in him, it is evident that Christ died for

you in a way and manner that he never died for Judas; he died for you so vicariously, that the offences you have committed were imputed to him and not to you, therefore your sins are forgiven you. If you trust him you cannot be punished for your sins, for Christ was punished for them. How can debts be demanded of you that were paid originally by your Saviour? You are clear. The Master said, "If ye seek me, let these go their way;" and when they seized Jesus they let his chosen people go. You are clear, before God's bar you are clear. Nobody can lay anything to your charge if you trust in Jesus Christ, for he suffered in your stead. Ignorance of that great fundamental truth of the whole gospel keeps thousands in darkness. It is the great ball and chain upon the leg of many spiritual prisoners; and if they did but know that, and could spell "substitution" without a mistake, they would very soon come into perfect joy and liberty.

This once more. It is thought that the expression, "Who is this?" was a contemptuous one on the part of many. They said, "What next, eh? We have heard of all sorts of excitements and noises—what next? Here is a man that has not where to lay his head; he is riding like a king. Here is a man who wears the common smock-frock of a Galilean peasant, and there are people spreading their garments in the way, and strewing branches of trees before him! What next, and what next?" Peradventure with scornful tone some said, "Well, what *shall* we live to see? The King of the Jews! Ah! King of the Jews! Yes, very likely! His father and mother are with us; is this the poor carpenter's son? King of the Jews, forsooth!"

And so they just sneered, and turned away. Yes; but, friends, stop a bit. Some persons that sneer deserve to be sneered at; but we will not treat you so. It cannot be, after all, such a very fine and wise thing to sneer at the Saviour, when you recollect that the angels do not sneer, and never did sneer at him. They came with him when first he descended into Bethlehem's manger; they came with Christmas carols on that memorable night when he was born of the Virgin. Did they not sing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men"? Do not sneer where angels sing. When he afterwards retired in an hour of sorrow to the garden of Gethsemane, where drops of blood fell on the ground, the angels came and strengthened him. Round the bloody tree they watched, and wondered how the Lord of Glory thus could die; and, when he went into the grave, methinks they hung their harps awhile in silence. This we know, that when, on the third day, he burst the bands of death, one of them came to roll away the stone, and two others sat—the one at the foot, the other at the head—where Jesus had lain; and when the forty days had been accomplished, and he went up to his abode,

> "They bring his chariot from on high
> To bear him to his throne,
> Clap their triumphant wings, and cry,
> The glorious work is done."

In heaven they cast their crowns before his throne. "All hail," they cry, "worthy is he that was slain." The mightiest archangel in glory counts it his honour to fly on Jesus Christ's errands. Oh! sneer not, then. What is there to sneer at? These spirits are, at least,

as wise as you. Pause awhile, and "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." Do you not care for angels? Then listen: do not sneer, for there are as wise men as you who have not sneered. You mention some great man who was a scoffer. Ah, well, so it may be, for great men are not always wise; but, on the other hand, what Newton believed in, what Locke trusted in, what Milton sang of, what a Bunyan could dream of in Bedford Gaol, cannot be quite such a contemptible thing after all. I might quote some names at which you could not sneer, and would not. You would think yourself unknown and base indeed, if you called them unknown and ignoble. The name which these men, great even in your esteem, thought worthy of their highest reverence, surely you need not be so fast to reproach. Come, search thou also into this problem. Give thy wit a little exercise upon this question: "Who is this?" and seek to know what Christ is, and whether he is not a suitable Saviour to thee. Do not affect to be contemptuous, for, after all, if you look at it, there is nothing to despise. What is the story? It is this, that though you are the enemy of Christ, Christ is no enemy of yours. Here is the story, that, while we were yet his enemies, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. I could never despise a man who loved his enemy, and if I saw him come to die to save another, and that other his foe, I could not despise him. I might think him unwise, and think the price of his fair life too dear to buy the wretch for whom he died, but I could not despise his love. Oh, there is something so majestic in love, that you cannot sneer at it. Uncurl that lip now. He dies not for himself in any sense; he bleeds for his friends

—more, for his foes. His dying prayer is, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and when his friends forsook him, yet his last thoughts were all for them. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." There is nothing to sneer at here. He casts aside his glory, hangs his azure mantle on the sky, and takes the rings from off his fingers to hang them up for stars, and down he comes. He comes, and is made a feeble child. In his mother's lap he lies. He lives so poverty-stricken, that he has not where to lay his head; and when the fox went to its burrow, and the bird to its nest, he went to the lone mountain, and his locks were wet with the dews of night. He had no friend, no helper; "Give me to drink," he says, as he sits upon the well of Samaria. He is forsaken, despised, and rejected of men; and, when he dies, even God himself leaves him. Jesus cries, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" And all this out of strong, all-conquering love for the sons of men. You cannot despise this. I would love the Saviour, even if he did not die for *me*. I could not help it. Such love as this must have my heart! such disinterested giving up of all for the sake of those who hated him, must claim our heart's affections. Do not despise him, let me say to you, for you do not know but what one day you may be where he is. Oh, if you knew that he would wash you in his precious blood, and make you clean; if you knew that he would cast his robe of righteousness about you; if you knew that he would take you up and put the palm-branch in your hand, and make you sing for ever of victory through his precious blood, you would not despise him. And

yet that *shall* be the portion of all of you if you believe on him, if you cast yourselves on his finished work. Where he is, there you shall be, and you shall see his face. Do not despise him, the sinner's friend. Can you dislike him, the lover of your soul? How can you but be lover of him? Shedding his tears over you, shedding his blood for you, how can you but cast yourselves at his feet?

Despise him not, for he is coming again in pomp and glory. Speak not lightly of him that is at the door. He is coming, perhaps, while I talk of these great matchless things. Soon may he come into our midst, but he will come with rainbow wreath and clouds of storm. He will come sitting on the great white throne, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. Don't despise him now, for you will not be able to despise him then. Will ye do now what you cannot do then? Oh, what a different tale will some men sing when Christ comes! How those who called him foul names will hide their fouler faces. Come up now; do not play the coward; come up now, and spit in his face again, ye villains, that once did it in his lifetime. Now, come and nail him to the tree again; Judas, come and give him a kiss, as once thou didst! Do you see them? Why, they fly. They hide their heads. The tale is not any longer that they despise and reject him, but it is, "Rocks, fall on and hide us." "Ye mountains, open your bowels, and give us a concealment." But it must not be; the Lamb's eyes of love have become the lion's eyes of fire, and he that was meek and gentle has now become fiery and terrible. The voice that once was sweet as music, is now loud and terrible as the

crash of thunder, and he that dealt out mercy, now deals out bolts of vengeance. Oh, despise not him who shall so soon come. Bow ye now, and "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Ask who is he? and when ye hear the question, answer it yourself, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Trust Jesus Christ, sinner, and you shall know who he is, and he, knowing who you are, will save you with a great salvation. Amen.

Election no Discouragement.

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."—1 Thess. i. 4-6.

T the very announcement of the text some will be ready to say, "Why preach upon so profound a doctrine as election?" I answer, because it is in God's word, and whatever is in the Word of God is to be preached. "But some truths ought to be kept back from the people," say some persons, "lest they should make an ill use thereof." Popish doctrine! I reply, for it was upon this theory that the priests kept back the Bible from the people, lest they should misuse the truth as it is in Jesus. "But are not some doctrines dangerous?" No, I answer, not if they be true. Truth is never dangerous, it is error and reticence that are fraught with peril. "But do not men misuse the doctrines of grace?" I grant you they do; but if we should destroy everything that men misuse, we should have nothing left. Are there to be no ropes because some fools will hang themselves? and must cutlery be for ever driven from the earth because there are some who will use

dangerous weapons for the destruction of their adversaries? Decidedly not. Besides, let me reply to you, men do read the Scriptures and think about these doctrines, and therefore often make mistakes about them; who then shall set them right if we, who preach the Word hold our tongues about the matter? I know that some men have embraced the doctrine of election and become Antinomians; such men would probably have found other excuses for their misdeeds if they had not sheltered themselves under the shadow of this doctrine. The sun, of course, will ripen weeds as well as fruitful plants, but that is no fault of the sun, but of the nature of the weed itself. We believe, however, that more persons are made Antinomians through those who deny the doctrine than through those who preach it. We give for our evidence this—that in Scotland you will scarcely find a congregation of Hyper-Calvinists, for this simple reason, that the Church of Scotland holds entire the whole doctrine upon this matter, and her ministers, as a rule, are not ashamed to preach it fearlessly and boldly, and in connection with the rest of the faith. Take this one doctrine, or any other, and preach upon it exclusively, and you distort it. The fairest face in the world, with the most comely features, would soon become unseemly if one feature were permitted to expand while the rest were kept in their usual form. Proportion, I take it, is beauty, and to preach every truth in its fair proportion, neither keeping back any nor giving undue prominence to any, is to preach the whole truth as Christ would have it preached; and on a Gospel thus entire and harmonious we may expect to have the blessing of the Most High. So much

by way of preface, not by way of apology. It is not my wont to offer any apology for speaking the truth.

Now what is this doctrine of election as spoken of in the text? "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." There *is* such a thing as election. Man *is* a free agent. Any man who should deny that, might well be thought unreasonable. Free-will is another thing from free-agency. Luther denounced free-will when he said, "Liberum arbitrium nomen est sine re." Free-will is the name for nothing; and President Edwards demolished it in his masterly treatise. God is a universal agent and doeth as he wills, but his will is supremely good. He is the superlative agent, and man, while acting according to the device of his own heart, is overruled by that sovereign and wise legislation which causeth the wrath of man (that agency in which the creature cannot govern himself) to praise him; and the remainder thereof he restrains. How these two things are true I cannot tell. It is not necessary for our good, either in this life or the next, that we should have the skill to solve such problems. I am not sure that in heaven we shall be able to know where the free agency of man and the sovereignty of God meet, but they are both great truths. God has predestinated everything, yet man is responsible, for he acts freely, and no constraint is put upon him when he sinneth and disobeyeth wantonly and wickedly the will of God. Now, so many as are saved, are saved, you will say, because they believe. I grant it you. This is most true—God forbid I should deny it—but wherefore do they believe? They believe as the result of the working of the grace of God in their hearts, and since every man who is saved confesses this,

since every true believer in the world acknowledges that something special has been done for him more than for the impenitent, the fact is established that God does make a difference; and if no one ever heard it laid as an impeachment against the Lord that he did make a difference, I cannot see why he should be impeached for intending to make that difference, which is just the doctrine of election. If I am saved, I know it will not be because of any goodness in me. If you be saved to-night you will freely confess that it is the distinguishing love of God that has made you to differ. The doctrine of election is simply God's intention to make that difference —while he gives mercy to all, to give more mercy to some—whereby the mercy received should be made effectual to their eternal salvation. Now this election of God is sovereign. He chooseth as he will. Who shall call him to account? "Can I not do as I will with my own?" is his answer to every caviller. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" is the solemn utterance that silences every one who would impugn the justice of the Most High. He has a right, seeing we are all criminals, to punish whom he will. As king of the universe he doubtless acts with discretion, but still according to his sovereignty, wisely and not wantonly, ever according to the counsel of his own will. Election, then, is sovereign. Again, election is free. Whatever may be God's reason for choosing a man, certainly it is not because of any good thing in that man. He is chosen because God will do so. We can get no further. We get as far as those words of Christ, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight," and there we stop, for beyond that no philosophy

and no Scripture can take us. As election is sovereign and free, so it is irreversible. Having chosen his people, he doth not cast them away nor call back the word that is gone out of his lips, for it is written, "He hateth putting away." He is of one mind, and who can turn him? Election is effectual. For "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." And this election is personal, for he calleth out his children one by one by their names. He calleth them even as he leadeth out the stars, and so he bringeth them every one to the Father's house above.

We have thus given a statement as to what this doctrine is. There we will leave it. Our present object is not so much to expound the doctrine, as to strike a blow or two at certain errors which are very common and which spring out of it. I know, dear friends, there are some who are so afraid of this doctrine that the mention of it produces alarm. If they were to meet a lion in their way they would not be more terrified than they are when they see this doctrine in Scripture or hear it from the pulpit. Let us try, if we can, should you be labouring under any distress of mind about it, to remove your difficulties. Will you please remember that this is not a point which you can understand at the commencement of spiritual and religious life? You would not teach your children, I suppose, to say their prayers backwards, and begin at "Amen;" and you are beginning at the wrong end when you want first of all to know your election instead of commencing with repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Election is a lesson for the more advanced students.

Faith and hope must be learnt, first of all, in the infant class, to which we all must go if we would be wise unto salvation. Now, if a child should have a book of algebra put into his hand, and should puzzle himself and say, "I shall never get an education, for I cannot understand this;" and then take down some ancient classic, and say, "I cannot comprehend this;" you would say, "Dear child, you have nothing to do with this yet. Here is a simpler book—a primer for you. Here you have A, B, C; get this first, and then, step by step, you shall attain to the rest." Believe in Christ. Simple trust in him is the first thing you have to do with, and after that you shall know the high, the sublime, and the glorious doctrine of God's decree; but do not begin here. You will mystify and ruin yourself; you will lose your way in a fog and get no good thereby. Again there is one thing very certain, that whatever this doctrine may be—and we will have no dispute about it just now—there are certain plain promises in God's Word which must be true, and this doctrine, if it be true, cannot possibly be inconsistent with them. Such promises are these—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Why, I might quote by the hour together some of these promises which are as wide as the poles; invitations that must not be narrowed—which we dare not narrow—it were more than our lives were worth—invitations which are addressed to every creature under heaven, in which every creature is bidden to hear and live. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." You know

the class of promises to which I allude. Now, I say again, you have to deal with them—get hold of them, come to Jesus Christ with them in your hand; and rest assured the doctrine of election, instead of pushing you back, shall stand like the servants about your father's table to make music, and that your whole soul shall dance to the glorious tune; or it shall be like a dish upon the table at the feast of the returning prodigal, of which you shall eat to the very full, for it shall by no means repulse you or show anything to you which may keep you from hoping in Christ.

Once more, this glorious doctrine of election, it is quite certain, cannot, whatever it may be, deliver you from your duty—and what is your duty? "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom God hath sent." So much is this your absolute duty that, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed." More on this account than for anything else Scripture says this is the one great sin—"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall convince the world of sin—of sin because ye believe not on me." You see this. Very well, then; inasmuch as God has so put it, that he commands you this night to trust Christ and to believe on him, that is what you have to see to, and you may rest perfectly sure that any quotation of the doctrine of election by you to exonerate you from what God commands you to perform is but a pitiful pretence. You are commanded to believe, and what God commands no doctrine can teach that it is unfit for you to do. May God help you to believe, for here the doctrine comes not to excuse you. The gospel commands you. Election through the Holy Ghost enables you. It is

your duty to believe, but no man ever was saved as a matter of duty, for that which saves is the gift of God, and your business now is with Christ only, and not with the decrees of the Father, which are all in the keeping of Christ, and shall presently be revealed to you. You have to go to Christ first, and to his Father afterwards, for saith he, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." You must go round the cross to get to the decree; you must go round by redemption to get to election, for there is no other way.

Our text says, very plainly too, that the apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians. How did he know it? The way by which the apostle knew it must be the method by which you and I are to know our election of God too? We have known in our day of some men who pretended to know their election by their impudence. They had got into their head the presumption that they were elected, and though they lived on in sin, and still did as they liked, they imagined they were God's chosen. This is what I call presuming upon election by sheer impudence. We know others who have imagined themselves to be elect, because of the visions that they have seen when they have been asleep or when they have been awake—for men have waking dreams—and they have brought these as evidences of their election. They are of as much value as cobwebs would be for a garment, and they will be of as much service to you at the day of judgment as a thief's convictions would be to him if he were in need of a character to commend him to mercy. You may dream long enough before you dream yourself into heaven, and you may have as many stupid notions in your head as there

are romances in your circulating libraries, but because they are in your head they are not therefore in God's book. We want a more sure word of testimony than this, and if we have it not, God forbid that we should indulge our vain conceits with the dainty thought that we are chosen of God. I have heard of one who said in an ale-house that he could say more than the rest, namely, that he was one of God's children; meanwhile he drank deeper into intoxication than the rest. Surely he might have said he was one of the devil's children with an emphasis, and he would have been correct. When immoral men, and men who live constantly in sin, prate about being God's children, we discern them at once. Just as we know a crab-tree when we see the fruit hanging upon it, so we understand what spirit they are of when we see their walk and conversation. O! it is detestable, loathsome above all loathsomeness, to hear men, whose characters in secret are infamous, and whose lives are destitute of every Christian virtue, boasting as though they had the keys of heaven, as though they could set up who they would, and pull down whomsoever they might please. Blessed be God, we are not under their domination, for a more terrific set of tyrants than they are the world has never known, and a more frightful reign of vice than they would inaugurate, if they had their way, I am sure villainy itself cannot conceive. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And if grace does not make us holy, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is not worth the having. O brethren if we are God's elect we must have some substantial evidence to attest it.

Now to our text. What are these evidences? They seem to be four. The first evidence appears to be the Word of God coming home with power. If you will turn to the text you will soon see how the apostle says the Gospel came—"Not to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost." The Gospel is preached in the ears of all; it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of man. The power which converts souls does not even lie in the preacher's simplicity or adaptation to his work; that is a secondary agent, but not the cause. Again, the power which converts souls does not even lie in the pathos which the speaker may employ. Men may weep to the tragic muse in a theatre as well as to prophetic strains in a chapel. Their creature passions may be impressed through the acting of the stage as well as by the utterance of God's own servants. No; there is something more than this wanted, and where that is absent all preaching is a nullity. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were mysterious power going with it—the Holy Ghost, changing the will of man. O sirs! we might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the Word, to give it power to convert the soul. We are reminded of Mr. Rowland Hill, who once met a man in the street at night, not quite drunk, but almost so, who said, "Well, Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts." "Yes," said he, "I dare say you

are one of *mine;* but if you were one of *God's* you would not be in the state in which you are now." Our converts are worth nothing. If they are converted by man they can be unconverted by man. If some charm or power of one preacher can bring them to Christ, some charm or power of another preacher can take them from Christ. True conversion is the work of the Holy Ghost, and of the Holy Ghost alone. Well, then, my hearers, did you ever—never mind where you were, whether in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, in this Tabernacle, or at some special service at one of the theatres; it matters not the place—did you ever, when listening to the Word, feel a divine power coming with it? "Well," perhaps you will say, "I have felt some impression." No, no; that may be wiped away. Have you felt a something coming with it which you could not understand; which, while it wooed you and won your heart, smote you as though a sword had gone through you, and that not with a flesh wound, but with a wound that divideth between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow, and was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart? Why, those who are really God's elect can tell a tale something like this. They can say—"There was a time when the Word was to me like a great ten thonged-whip; my shoulders were stripped bare, and every time the Word was preached it seemed to make a gushing within my soul. I trembled; I saw God in arms against me; I understood that I was in debt to justice and could not pay; that I was involved in a controversy against my Maker, and could not carry it out. I saw myself stripped naked to my shame, leprous from head to foot, a bankrupt and a felon ready to be

given over to a traitor's doom." Then the Word came with power to your soul. "And O," says such an one, "I remember too when it came home to my heart, and made me leap for very joy, for that Word took all my load away; it showed me Christ's power to save. I had known that before, but now I felt it. I had understood that he could save, but now that fact came home to me. I went to Jesus just as I was; I touched the hem of his garment; I was made whole. I found now that the Word was not a fiction—that there was a reality in it. I had listened scores of times, and he that spake was as one that played a tune upon an instrument; but now he seemed to be dealing with me, putting his hand right into my heart, and getting hold of me. He brought me first to God's judgment-seat, and there I stood and heard the thunders roll; and then he brought me to the mercy-seat, and I saw the blood sprinkled on it, and I went home triumphing because sin was washed away." Did the Word ever come home with this power to your souls? And since that has the Word rebuked you? Has it sometimes cut down your hopes? Do you sometimes, after hearing a sermon, feel as if it had been like a great hurricane tearing right through the forest of your thoughts, and cutting its own course, and leaving many a thing that you thought alive, dead, swept down to the ground? Do you feel, too, when you go home from God's house, as if God himself had been there, as if you did not know what it was; it could not have been the speaker nor the words he uttered, but the very God did come and look into your eyes, and see the thoughts of your heart, and turn your heart upside down, and then fill it full again with his love, and with

his light, and with his truth and with his joy, with his peace, and with his desire after holiness? Is it so with you? for where the Word is not with power to your souls you lack the proof of election. I do not say that it will be so every time. You must not expect every time that God will speak with you; in fact, the preacher himself fails often, and is painfully conscious of it. How shall one man always speak without sometimes feeling that he himself is not in a fit frame to be God's mouth-piece? But yet let it be a clown from the country, if he preach God's Word; it is not the clown, nor yet the archbishop; it is the Word that is quick and powerful when the Spirit is with it; and your evidence of election is blotted, it is blurred, unless the Word has come to you with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. People come and hear sermons in this place, and then they go out and say, "How did you like it?"—as if that signified to anybody—"How did you like it?" and one says, "O, very well;" and another says, "O, not at all." And do you think we live on the breath of your nostrils? Do you believe that God's servants, if they be so, can care for what you think of them? Nay, verily I think they are inclined to say, if you should reply, "I enjoyed the sermon," "Then we must have been unfaithful or else you would have been angry. Then we must have slurred over something, or else it would have so cut your conscience as with the jagged edges of a knife, that you would say, 'Well, I did not think how I liked it; I was thinking how I liked myself, and what about my own state before God; that was the matter that exercised me. Not whether he preached well, but whether I stood accepted in Christ, or whether I was a

castaway.'" My dear hearers, do you learn to hear like that? If you do not; if going to church and to chapel be to you like going to an oratorio, or like listening to some orator who speaks upon temporal matters, then you lack the evidence of election; the Word has not come to your souls with power.

But there is yet a second evidence of election to which we will refer briefly, "And in much assurance." It seems, then, that those whom God has chosen do receive the word with much assurance—not all of them with full assurance; that is a grace they get afterwards—but with much assurance. Sometimes, you know, there are men who go upon very strange principles. It is somewhat difficult to know what principles are enforced and acknowledged in this age, for there are some persons whose principles allow them to say black and white at the same time, and there are certain persons whose religious principles are not much unlike this. They put a hymn book in their pockets when they are going to meeting; they put a comic song book in their pockets when they are going somewhere else; they can hold with the hare and run with the hounds, and such people as these never have any very great confidence in their religion; and it is very proper that they should not, for their religion is not worth the time they spend in making a profession of it. But the true Christian, when he gets holds of principles, keeps them, and there is no mistake about the grip with which he maintains his hold of them. "Ah!" saith he, "that Word which I have heard in my ears is the very truth of God, and it is true to me, and real and substantial to me, and here I clasp it with both my hands, with a clasp that neither time, nor tribulation,

nor death, shall ever cause me to let go." To a Christian man his religion is a part of himself; he believes the truth, not because he has been told it or taught it by his mother, or his friend, but because it is true to him, like the servant girl who, when she could not answer her infidel master, said, "Sir, I cannot answer you, but I have a something in here that would if it could speak." There is "much assurance." Sinners who have once felt their need of a Saviour feel very much assurance about his preciousness, and saints that have once found him precious have very much assurance about his divinity, about his atonement, about his everlasting love, about his immortal dignity, as a prophet, a priest, and a king. They are sure of it. I know some persons will say if a man speaks positively he is dogmatical. Glorious old dogmatism, when wilt thou come back again to earth? It is these "ifs," and "buts," and qualifications, these "perhapses" and "may be so's" that have ruined our pulpits. Look at Luther, when he stood up for the glory of his God, was there ever such a dogmatist? "I believe it," he said, "and therefore I speak it." From that day when on Pilate's staircase he was trying to creep up and down the stairs to win heaven, when the sentence out of the musty folio came before him, "Justified by faith we have peace with God," that man was as sure that works could not save him as he was of his own existence. Now, if he had come out and said, "Gentlemen, I have a theory to propound that may be correct; excuse my doing so, and so on," the Papacy had been dominant to this day. The man knew God had said it, and he felt that that was God's own way to his own soul, and he could not

help dogmatising with that glorious force of secession which soon laid his foes prostrate at his feet. Now have *you* received the gospel "with much assurance?" If you have, and you can say, "Christ is mine; I trust in him, and though I have sometimes doubts about my own interest in him, yet I do know by experience in my own soul that he is a precious Christ—I know not by "Paley's Evidences" nor by "Butler's Analogy," but I know by my heart's inward evidence, I know by the analogy of my own soul's experience, that the book which I have received is no cunningly devised fable, but something that came from God to draw my soul up to God"—that is another evidence of election. If you have that, never mind; I hardly care whether you believe the doctrine of election or not; you are elect. As I have sometimes told a brother who has denied the doctrine of final perseverance, when I have seen his holy life, "Never mind, my brother, you *will* persevere to the end, and you will prove the doctrine that you don't believe. You may not be able to receive this, but when you get to heaven, if such has been your experience, you will wake up and say, "Well, I am one of the elect. I made a deal of fuss about it while on earth, and I will make a deal of music about it now that I have got to heaven, and I will sing more sweetly and loudly than all the rest, 'Unto him that hath loved me and washed me from my sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever.'"

But there is a third evidence, and about that we will be even more brief, for time flies. "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord." That is the third; by which the apostle does not mean that they said, "I am

of Paul, I am of Silas, I am of Timothy." No, no, they imitated Paul so far as he imitated Christ. Thomas a'Kempis wrote a book about the imitation of Christ, and a blessed book in some respects it is; but I would like the Holy Spirit to write in your hearts *the* imitation of Christ, and that shall be your sweet proof that you are chosen of God. Are you Christ-like or do you want to be? Can you forgive your enemy? ay! and can you love him, and do him good? Could you say to-night, "I am no more any man's enemy than is the babe that is new born?" and do you desire not to live unselfishly, to live for others, to live for God? Are you prayerful? Do you come to God in prayer as Jesus did? Are you careful of your words and of your acts as Christ was? I do not ask you if you are perfect, but I do ask whether you follow the Perfect One? We are to be followers of Christ, and if not with equal steps, still with steps that would be equal if they could. If we follow Christ, that will be one of the surest proofs of our election to others, though perhaps to ourselves, if we be humble-minded, it will be no proof, since we shall rather see our blemishes than our virtues, and mourn over our sins rather than rejoice in our graces. If a man follow not Christ, those who look on may be safe enough in concluding that, whatever he may say about election, and however much he may speak, he is not the Lord's. On that point I shall not stop, because I have already enlarged upon it in a former part of the discourse; but the last point, as time fails us, is this.

It seems that those of whose election the apostle was sure, received the Word of God (if you look further)

"in much affliction," but "with joy in the Holy Ghost." What say you to this, you whose religion consists of a slavish attendance upon forms that you detest? See how many there are who go to a place of worship just because it is not respectable to stop away, but who often wish it were. And when they get on the Continent,—what about many of your Christians? Where is the Sabbath with them then? Where is their care for God's house? With what misery do some people go up to the house of the Lord. Why? Because they regard it as a place where they ought to be very solemn. It is not a home to them; it is a prison. Your children, I suppose, are just about coming home for their holidays. How do they come into their father's house? Dull, demure, as if they could not speak? No, bless their little hearts, they come running up to their father's knees, so glad to be there, and home from school. That is how a man whose religion is his delight comes up to the house of the Lord. He feels that it is his Father's house. He would be reverent, for his Father is God, but he must be happy, for God is his Father. See again the Christian when he goes to his closet. Ungodly persons will not go there at all; or, if they do, it is because they want to win heaven by it; so they go through their dreary prayers; and what a dreary thing it must be for a man to pray when he never expects to be heard, and when he has no spirit of prayer! It is like a horse going round a mill grinding for somebody else, and never getting any farther, the same to be done to-morrow, and the same the day after, and so on. Sometimes as the little church bells go of a morning in certain churches, to fetch people out, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, there are some persons to be found there to early prayers, and they go to evening prayers too, and a very good thing this would be, if those who attend went there with holy joy; but there is the sexton, and he says it is a great trouble to be always opening the doors like that when nobody comes except three old women that have got alms-houses, and two that expect them, and therefore are there, and they think that an acceptable service to God. But they who go because they would not stop away if they could, they who worship God because it is a delight, and a pleasure, and a holy thing, and honourable—these are men who delight in God's Word, who give the best evidence of being chosen of God. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who make your faces miserable that ye may appear unto men to fast. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that reads the heart asketh not that your head may hang down like a bulrush, but that ye may do deeds of mercy, and walk humbly with your God, and ye who can delight yourselves in your God, shall have the desires of your heart. Ye that can rejoice in the Lord always, and triumph in his name, shall go from strength to strength, and going at last to glory, you shall find that you came there as the result of his divine purpose and decree, and you shall give him all the praise.

But now, lastly, I hear some say, "But I want to know whether *I* am elect. I cannot say that the Word ever came to me with power—I cannot say I received it in much assurance—I cannot say I am a follower of Christ—I cannot say I have received the Word with joy." Well, dear brother, then leave that question alone. Instead of that, let me propound this,

"Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Christ to save your soul?" He will do it, if, just as thou art, whoever thou mayst be, thou wilt come to Christ, and give thyself up to him to save thee, to have thee, to hold thee for better for worse in life and through death. The moment thou believest thou art saved, that act of faith, through the precious blood of Christ will put away your every sin. You will not begin to be saved; you *are* saved. You will not be put into a salvable condition, but saved the moment you believe —completely and perfectly saved. "O," saith one, "I would I could trust Christ." Sayest thou so, man? "Whosoever will, let him come;" let him trust Christ. God help thee now to do it. Trust Jesus, and you are saved. And this is addressed to every one of you without exception, "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." The Lord help you to trust Jesus, and then you may go on your way with joy, "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

The Church the World's Hope.

"Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."
—Acts xxvii. 24.

OUR Apostle Paul had given some very good advice to the mariners of this ship. They had thought fit to reject it. What then? Now some of us are of such short temper that if our good advice should be rejected we should be in a huff, and never offer any more, and we should feel some sort of pleasure in seeing those persons get into mischief, who were so foolish as not to take our sage counsel. Not so the Apostle Paul. After he had prudently abstained for some time from saying anything—for there is a time to be silent—he at length gave proof of his unabated affection to them by the good advice which he offered. Let us take a lesson from him, and let us forgive our brethren even to seventy times seven; and if, after having done our very best, we still find our advice rejected, let us persevere in our work of love. One other remark. Note the comfort that was given to our apostle. He had been long out at sea, and with the rest had suffered much. The comfort given him was, "Fear not, Paul, for thou must stand before Cæsar." No very great comfort, you will say. It

seems no more comfort than if the angel had said, "You can't be drowned, for you are to be devoured by a lion." Some such comfort Bishop Ridley took to himself when, being rowed up the river to the burning, a little storm coming on, and the watermen being much afraid, he said, "Fear not, boatmen, the bishop that is doomed to be burned cannot be drowned." Yet there is real comfort in the words of the angel, for it was the apostle's intense desire to preach Christ before Nero. He wished to proclaim the gospel at Rome; he had had great trouble of heart for those that had not seen his face in the flesh; and therefore whether Nero be a lion or not, he was but too glad to beard him for Christ's sake. And when a man has no self remaining, but has given himself up as a living sacrifice for Christ, that which would be a terror to another man becomes a comfort to him. "I am now ready to be offered up," said the apostle; and it was given to him even as a comfort that he must be offered up by some bloody death, and not escape by the milder method of a passage to heaven by sea. Now our apostle found a comfort in the fact that those with him would be preserved. It had been the subject of his prayer, so that he was cheered not only with the prospect of himself prophesying at Rome, but with the hope of seeing all his comrades safe on shore.

Now I have two or three things to talk of to-night; so let me proceed with them at once.

I. The first practical observation founded upon my text is this—a godly man may often be thrown into an ill position for the good of others. Paul was put into a ship—into a ship among thieves and criminals—into a

ship among sailors and soldiers, who were none of the best in those days, but he was put there for their good. This, then, I would lay down as a general theory—there are multitudes of Christians who are in places very uncomfortable, and, perhaps, very unsuitable for them, who are put there for the good of others.

If they were not so placed they would not be like their Lord. Why was Christ on earth at all but for the good of sinners? Why does he sit there at a publican's table? Why eats he bread with a harlot? Why does he permit an unclean woman to come and wash his feet? As for himself, 'tis pain to him, pain to his holy nature, to come into contact with evil. But our Lord was the Physician, and where should a physician be but among the sick? Now as you and I are to be made like our Lord, we must not marvel if sometimes we are thrown, as he was, into company which we would not choose for its own sake, but into which Providence puts us that we may do good.

Moreover, is not this just the reason why the saints of God are on earth at all? Why does he not send an express chariot to take them at once to heaven? There is no necessity for saints being on earth that I know of, except for the good of their fellow-men. Sanctification might be completed in a moment: as for all the rest, it is done. He hath made us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Why stay we here, then, at all, but that we may be salt in the midst of putrefaction—light in the midst of darkness—life in the midst of death? The Church is the world's hope. As Christ is the hope of the Church, so the Church is the hope of the world. The saints become, under

Christ, the world's saviours. Then we must not marvel, being here for this very purpose, if Christ does throw us like a handful of salt just where the putrefaction is the worst; or if he should cast us, as he hath often done with his saints aforetime, where our influence is most needed.

And will you please to recollect, dear friends, that there have been special cases in Scripture where the putting a person into an unpleasant condition has been a great boon to his fellow men? There is Joseph in the dungeon. What is he there for? Why, with his haggard look and shaggy beard, is he sitting down in the round dungeon tower of the chief of the slaughtermen? He is put there that he may relieve the baker and the butler of their distress, and yet more fully, that he may provide food for his ungrateful brethren who had sold him for a slave. The salvation of Israel's offspring depends upon Joseph being put into prison. Look at a more majestic case. There, upon the ruins of a once glorious temple, sits a grand old man, weeping as though he had been a masculine Niobe; tears flow down both his cheeks, and these are the words he cries:—"O that my head were waters, and mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" It is old Jeremy. Why is he there? why is he not in Babylon? why is he not in some place where he could be comfortably cared for? Israel wants him. The women that flock around him like stricken deer need his comfort, and the sinners in Zion, that hide their faces from his weeping eyes, need him to pour out those burning syllables which make their consciences start, seared though they be. If you should say that these are two instances which are above

your level, let me ask you why was that little maid taken prisoner by the Syrians and carried away from her country? Not a pleasant thing, for a child to be torn away from her family and become a slave, even though it be in the house of the good Naaman. Why is she there? Naaman the leper must be healed; the Syrian king must know that the Lord of Israel can work wonders; and therefore that little maid must be carried away, and she must be where otherwise she would not wish to be placed.

I need not give any more proofs that such has been often the case. Instead of that, let me give instances. There is a young man here—he is hardly a man yet—whose father in binding him an apprentice made a mistake. Parents should be very careful whom they choose to be instructors of their sons. They should not wantonly put a youth, who has been trained under pious influences, under subjection to an ungodly man, however business-like he may be. Well, evidently your parent made a mistake, and now you are in a family where religion is lightly spoken of. You get out on the Sabbath; you don't get out at other times; and if you mention religion you are either met with a sneer or, perhaps, with something worse. Well, young believer, this is a hard trial for you. We do not generally send our lads to battle, but our Master knows how sometimes to do the greatest feats by the feeblest instrumentality. What if God should intend to bless your master's family through you? What if he has ordained to send you to that house on purpose, that in the garb of an apprentice you may be a missionary of the cross? It may be so. Opportunities will occur to you; there will

be fitting occasions for the use of them; and you will see God's wisdom even in your father's mistake. Another of you happens to be one of a family, not by mistake, but in the common course of providence. Electing love has lit on you and left an ungodly parent behind, and brothers and sisters run the downward road. Don't be too sad over this. I don't know whether this may not be a cause for joy to you. God has this day lighted a lamp in your father's house. It may never go out. Inasmuch as you are converted, salvation has come to your house. O! watch for your brother's soul; pray for your sister's conversion; take your parents in the arms of faith before God; and who can tell but that it shall prove to be the best thing in your life that you were thus placed in a family were Christ was not feared? Or you are a workman—I know a great many instances—and perhaps you have come up from the country for the sake of better work. It may be that in the country you worked in some little shop where there was a godly man with you, and now you have come into one of our large shops in London and got some work. There is a deal of swearing on both sides of you, and if you are known to go to a house of prayer, the other men mark you out and call you some odd name or other. I know you say, "I wish I could get into another place; I will throw up my work: I must—I will throw up my work, and I will go somewhere else." Don't—don't do so. It is very likely God has sent you there just as he sent Paul into the ship. Instead of leaving, gird up your loins like a man and cry to God that he would give you all them that sail with you, that they may yet be saved. Your advent into that workshop may be as if an

angel had come straight from heaven and gone down to the vilest place to make it ring with the songs of joy. Possibly, dear friends, to multiply instances—some of you may happen to live in a very low locality. In such a crowded place as London, and especially now that the railways make the houses of artisans so scarce, you may have to live where you do not like to live. On both sides of you, you know, the houses are not what you would wish them to be; and down in the court on Sunday what a scene there is! You went home this morning, and you saw people in their shirt-sleeves lolling about, and waiting at the corner till the public-house was opened that they might go in and drink. And you will go home to-night and see what you do not like to see. Now, I do not know that you should be in a hurry to get out of that place. It is just possible that you are put there for some end or design. Who can tell the benefit your good example may be? And if you are bold enough to speak a word for Christ, there may be a neighbour in that court, or in that alley, who, though he never did go up to the house of God before, will go with you. It may have been written in the book of God's predestination that you must needs pass through that Samaria that you might find that fallen woman, and that she might be brought to Christ—who knows? And there are some of you going to emigrate. Some dear friends who have been among us for years, find it best to cross the seas. I would not weep, my brethren —I would not sorrow at your departure, for who knows, unpleasant though it be to rend oneself from one's connections, and to leave one's native land, you may go forth to carry seed that shall be wafted over a continent,

and bring forth fruit in years to come? Put a Christian where you may, however unpleasant to himself, he cannot be out of place. If Providence thrusts him there it is well. Ay, and if what some of you dread so much should come to pass—if in your old age the workhouse should be the only place that is to receive you—ah! it is not pleasant to look forward to it; but I can conceive a Christian pauper doing more good for God in the house of poverty than many a peer has been able to do in Parliament. I can conceive you shedding a light and lustre along those walls which shall rebuke the harshness of those that are masters, and kindle light, and love, and hope in some bosoms that had grown strangers to all those heavenly things. Good Master! if thou cast us into a ship we will ask thee to give us all that sail with us, and if thou put us anywhere we will look about us to see what we can do that we may honour thee!

I must not leave this point, even though time should fly, until I have just made one or two remarks rapidly.

Do not get into these places of your own choice. "Put your finger in the fire," said one to a martyr once, "and see whether you can burn." "No," said he, "I don't see the use of that. If I put my own finger into the fire I have no promise from God; but if he calls me to burn for his sake I have no doubt he will give me strength to do it." You have no business to pick bad places to live in; you have no right to expose yourself to danger. That is a foolish thing; but if God shall do it—take this for my next remark—do not be in a hurry to undo it. You may leap out of the frying-pan into the fire. You may go from bad to worse. It is just possible

that if the present place has one temptation, the next may have another set. For my part I do not like changing temptations. I know my old temptations—not as well as I would like to know them, but still if the Devil could change the whole set of my temptations I do not know what would become of me. Better keep the old ones, I think. You have been tried in one point, you have got used to it, and are growing stronger in that point. No need to run after a fresh ordeal, but if God has placed you there, be like Paul—be very prudent. Do not talk very much. There is wisdom in holding your tongue. Paul gave his advice, but he abstained a long time before he gave it again. He timed himself; and there is nothing like watching opportunities. You young persons especially, if you live in families, and want to do them good, take care that you are willing to do good in temporal things. Lend a hand when they want your help. Paul and Luke helped to throw the tackling into the sea, so the chapter tells us—ay, and the sailors liked them all the better for it. They said, "There is Luke, a passenger, and here is Paul a prisoner; they are neither of them bound to work, but they have buckled to and helped us: we will listen to them, for they are very handy fellows." Young man, just try and make the best use of yourself. If you are placed in a family that is irreligious, make them value you; just show them that you will do anything you can to serve them. They will not believe the reality of your spiritual affection unless you show a temporal affection too. And when the time comes, do not hesitate to speak, but let your speaking be mainly by your actions. The best sermon Paul preached was when he took bread and gave thanks.

He did not do that for show. It was just in the daily course of his habitual godliness that the man of God came forth boldly before their eyes. Do not conceal your godliness from those around you. Though at first they may laugh at you and despise you, who can tell but that like Paul you may gain influence till they will do anything you tell them, and like Paul, by means of that influence you may save all that are in the house, and so the text may come true of you, "I have given thee all them that sail with thee."

II. A second lesson suggested to us is this. Wherever we are cast we should anxiously ask of God all the souls that sail with us.

God says he gave the souls to Paul; therefore I conclude Paul had asked him. How many were they? Some two hundred and seventy; and yet he gave them all. Father, some seven or eight make up your family; or if it be of larger dimensions, at least you have not in all your kinsfolk, I should think, so many as the two hundred and seventy. Do not therefore in your prayers leave out one child, nor one connection, nor one friend. Pray to God for them all. Now, they will be of all sorts. Let me describe those that sailed with Paul. There was one good one: that was Luke. Well, Luke was saved. You have got one pious son—you have one converted daughter. Continue in your prayer till you see that child safely landed with you in heaven. Perhaps you have one courteous passenger with you in the ship, like Julius the centurion, of whom we read in the third verse of the chapter, that he entreated Paul courteously. Be very earnest in prayer, for those who are willing to hear the Word. O, how good it is if we

have in our families brothers and sisters, or servants, or masters, who treat the Word of God with deference and respect. Let not these be omitted in our supplication Anxiously pray for them. Perhaps you have among your connections some knowing ones. Paul had. There was the master of the ship; he knew better than Paul, or at least he preferred his own conceit to Paul's counsel. Do not give up the self-conceited, the suspicious, the cavilling, the sceptical, pray for them till you have all in the ship. Possibly, nay certainly, you have some worldly friends. You have a son, perhaps, that is exceedingly careful about this world, but careless of the next. Do not give him up. There was the owner of the ship on board. All he cared about was getting his corn to Rome in time to catch the next market. He did not care what became of the sailors or what became of Paul. So pray for worldly relatives; do not be satisfied to leave any of them out. And then it may be you have on board, in connection with you, some that are very careless, and some who add to this carelessness even cruelty and a want of gratitude; such were the soldiers. They counselled to kill Paul—Paul who had preserved them; but nevertheless Paul prayed for the soldiers. Do not, I pray you, leave out the most unkind, the most flinty-hearted of your friends and neighbours. Or it may be you have a cunning and selfish friend. Do not forget him. Such were the sailors. Under pretence of casting anchors out of the foreship, they were attempting to get into a boat and escape, and so leave the ship, and its hundreds of passengers, to perish in the storm. He prayed for the sailors. Do you the same. Now there were many of them that could not

swim, but he still prayed that those that could not swim might be saved; and there were some that could swim, but he prayed for them quite as much as for those who could not. So you have some that are converted and some that are not; you have some that are moral and some that are not; but yet plead for all, and let not the Lord curtail his word till he has given you all them that sail with you.

Now I want you to notice—especially you that are parents—something that the apostle did *not* pray for. I do not read that he ever prayed "Lord save the ship." No. Now, the ship is like your family name—like your family dignity. Do not be praying about that. "Lord, give me my children's souls, and let my name be blotted out, if thou wilt, as long as their souls be saved." And I do not find that the apostle ever prayed about the cargo. He let them fling the wheat out, and never cared for that. So you need not pray about your wealth. Put that into God's hand, and say, "Lord, do as thou wilt with my sons and daughters—save their souls. I don't ask fortunes for them; I ask grace. I would, if it were thy will, that they might have food convenient always, and never need bread; but still, Lord, I would rather see their souls saved and see them in poverty, than see them rich and be lost." Moreover, I do not find that Paul made any condition about it. He did not tell the Lord *when* he wanted these people saved; so you are not to expect that God will save your children just when you please. You may never live to see it; it may be when you are dead and gone; but still, do be earnest that God will give you all of them. And Paul did not make a stipulation as to *how* it should be done.

I recollect my mother saying, "I prayed that you might be saved, but I never prayed that you might be a Baptist;" but, nevertheless, I became a Baptist, for, as I reminded her, the Lord was able to do for her "exceeding abundantly above what she could ask or think," and he did it. She expected, of course, that the child would be an Independent. Well, as long as your children are saved, you need not put in any conditions as to the mode. Sooner see your son and daughter go to the Established Church saved, than see them go to your own place of worship and be lost. We like to see them go with us to our place of worship. I think it is right they should; and it is a great joy to a Christian's heart to see all his children walking with him to the same sanctuary; but O! that is a mere trifle compared with the solemn matter of seeing them saved. And, once more, though Paul did get them all saved, yet he did not ask God to save them without means; nor did it please God to do so either, for though the means were contemptible, yet they were means—"Some on boards, and some on broken pieces; and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land." O, we must try to put the "boards and broken pieces of the ship" in the way of those we wish to be saved. We must try to give them a plank to swim to shore on in our earnest instructions, and our indefatigable exertions to bring them to know the Lord.

Now, dear friends, having pointed the arrow, I will try to shoot it. Surely you, who love the Lord yourselves, will take up this matter from this time forth, and ask the Lord to give you all them that sail with you.

III. As we should ask for all, so we should labour for the conversion of all that sail with us.

There were two Athenians who were to be employed by the republic in some great work. The first one had great gifts of speech; he stood up before the Athenian populace and addressed them, describing the style in which the work should be done and depicting his own qualifications and the congratulations with which they would receive him when they saw how beautifully he had finished all their designs. The next workman had no powers of speech, so, standing up before the Athenian assembly, he said, "I cannot speak, but all that So-and-so has said, I will do." They chose him—wisely chose him—believing he would be a man of deeds, while the other might probably be a man of words. Now if you are men of deeds you will be the best men. He that only prays for a thing, but does not work for it, is like the workman that could talk well. He that can work as well as pray is the best workman to be employed in the Master's service.

It may be you will say, "But what am I to do? How can I be the means of saving all them that sail with me?" Well, the first thing you can do is to begin early with good advice. Paul gave his advice before they set sail. As soon as ever your children can understand anything, let them know about Christ. Begin early. A certain minister called some time ago to see a mother, having heard that a child about twelve years old was dead. The mother was in very deep distress, and the pastor was not at all surprised at that. He talked to her about the Lord's giving and the Lord's taking away, when she suddenly stopped him and said, "Yes,

sir, I know the consolations which may be offered to a mother who has lost her child, and I appreciate them all! but I have a sting that you cannot remove. There is a venom in my grief that you cannot cure." He asked her what that was. Said she, "I have had it on my conscience to speak to my boy solemnly and privately about his soul for this last year past, but my deceitful heart has always said, 'Do it to-morrow;' and I thought"—(here she burst into tears,—the pastor had to wait awhile till she could resume her story)—"I thought that, as his mind was opening, and he was twelve years of age, I would now do it. Yesterday morning I meant to do it—the very morning he took ill I thought I would do it, and when I heard him say that he had a headache I was glad of it, thinking that while I was soothing him he would be more ready to hear a mother's words; but, oh, sir, before I had an opportunity of speaking to him he was much worse, and I had to take him to bed; and when he was in bed he fell asleep. I sent for the physician, but my child had soon fallen into unconsciousness, and he was shortly after removed from me; he has gone before God, and I never solemnly and privately talked to him about his soul. That is a grief you cannot remove." Oh, mothers and fathers, never have that sting! Your children may die: begin with them now, that they may not die before you have had an opportunity of telling them the way of salvation. But after having given this early advice you must not think the work is done. Your boy may forget it. He may turn out a wild youth, and run quite away from you; but do continue in prayer. And let me say to you, do continue in family prayer. I do think, if we

should look into those cases where the sons and daughters of Christian people turn out badly, it would be found to be usually the parents' own fault. I think you would find they neglect to pray with their children. Oh, dear friends, there can be no ordinance more likely to be blest than that heavenly institution of family prayer, when you can gather together, and, in the presence of the child, pray for his soul, and mother and father can unite hearts together in the desire that their offspring may live before God. Paul continued to pray. Take you Paul's example, and you may hope to see God give you all them that sail with you.

And then remember, dear friends, if you would have your children saved, there is something you must not do. If Paul had prayed for these people, and then had gone down below into the hold with an auger, and had begun boring holes in the ship, you would have said, "Oh, it is no use that scoundrel praying, for see, he is scuttling the ship; he is praying to God to save them, and then going straight and doing the mischief." You parents that are inconsistent—you mothers that don't keep your promises—you fathers that talk as you ought not to talk —especially careless, prayerless parents, I do not ask you to pray for your children. Pray for yourselves first. It were an awful mockery to talk about seeing your children go to heaven. You are dragging them to hell —you are dragging them to hell now. You may think that your son will not swear. Why not swear, if the father does? Do you think the young cubs will not roar if the old lion sets the example? Of course they will. You will see your children multiplied images of your own iniquity. Let our conduct be consistent; let

our every-day life be pure and holy: so shall we hope to see our children and our connections saved. And I do think, dear friends, as the Apostle Paul was very anxious to point them the way in which they might be saved, telling them that the sailors must abide in the ship, and they must do this and that, so we should be very careful to explain to our children, neighbours, and connections, the way of salvation; and I think we ought to do this, as much as possible, in private ways. I will tell you an anecdote:—A good bishop of the Methodist Church, Bishop Arsbury, in travelling on horseback through South Carolina, about a hundred years ago, saw a negro sitting quite close by the edge of a forest, fishing with a line. This negro was an old man, called Punch, well known for his dissolute conduct and his filthy speech. The bishop, as soon as he saw him, proceeded deliberately to dismount, tied his horse up to a tree, and went and sat down by the bank, letting his feet hang over the edge, like Punch. Finding that the negro was willing to talk, and pleased with his affability, he began to talk to him about his soul's concern. He told him about the ruin of the fall, about the result of sin, about the Redeemer, about faith, and about the sweet invitations of Christ to the sinner to come to him and live. Punch had never heard anything like it; and when the bishop had done, he said, "Now I will sing you a song," for Punch was mightily fond of songs, and he sang with him that hymn beginning:—

"Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,
We helpless sinners lay,
Without one struggling beam of hope,
Or spark of gleaming day.

With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief,
He saw—and, oh, amazing love!—
He ran to our relief.

Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste he fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."

When he had sung through the hymn, he went on his horse and resumed his journey as a bishop should do having done his work. The negro went home and masticated and digested this, and if you had been on the plantation some months after, you would have seen the poor old hut where the negro lived crowded full of the poor neglected sons of Africa; and who was preaching? Why, the negro that was fishing by the river's bank, had now become a fisher of souls. Months went on; the holy flame had begun to spread; the overseer was alarmed; and he went down to Punch's cabin to put a stop to it. Punch was preaching. He stopped outside to listen to what was said: conviction pierced his heart. He went in; he fell on his knees, and joined in prayer; and throughout that province the gospel mightily spread and prevailed. O, what you might do, dear friends, if you would talk like this! You men and women—you do not need to be preachers in order to do good. I don't know—but I can think—why the devil ever invented pulpit gowns and bibs, and all that sort of distinction between clergymen and laymen. I am no clergyman. I know of nothing of the kind. There is no such distinction in the New Testament. We are all Christians if we are converted, and there is

no distinction in them. We are either brethren in Christ, or else "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." It is sometimes asked, "Ought laymen to preach?" Nonsense! any man may preach if he has the ability. There are no such things—I do believe in my soul that there is no such thing intended as saying, "There, these people are to preach—these people are to talk of Christ; and all the rest of you are to hold your tongues and listen." No, no, no! Let every man of you preach; let every woman among you in her own sphere, talk, and tell of what the Lord has done for her soul! I do believe it is the invention of Satan—I repeat it—to lift up some few above the rest, and say, "Only some of you are to fight the Lord's battles." Up, guards, and at them! not your colonels only, but every man in the ranks—not here and there a lieutenant, but every man! "England expects every man"—not the captains merely, but every man—"to do his duty;" and Christ expects every man—not here and there one that is paid for doing it—the minister– but every man—to tell what God has done for his soul. Do you this, and who can tell what good may come of it?

Still—and here I shall conclude—never be satisfied without clinching the whole work with prayer. You see, Paul did not get those that were in the ship by his works. God gave them to him. Everything is of grace. Paul may pray, and Paul may preach, but Paul does not purchase. That is Christ's work. God gives—gives freely; and if you see friends and connections saved it must be the gift of God's grace to you. Just as much as your own salvation was God's gift to

you, so the salvation of friends and dependents must be a gift from God to you. What then? Be much in prayer. I wish some of you mothers would meet together sometimes and pray for your children. I think it would be a noble thing for a dozen of you, perhaps, to come together only for prayer, if any of you have got unconverted children. And you fathers sometimes, when you meet, if you have children who have not yielded to divine grace, couldn't you say, "Come, friend So-and-so, you and I have got the same burden; let us bear it together"? Just at the back of that hoarding there, while this place was in building, there was a prayer breathed one night by two souls, that God would bless this place. There were only two, and nobody knew that that supplication went up to heaven; and I, for one, have felt strengthened by their prayer ever since. It was but a "chance" meeting, as we say. It was night, and they both looked in at the same time, and met each other. "Ah, friend So-and-so," said one, "let us go up yonder, in a quiet nook, and pray, 'God bless the Tabernacle.'" And God has blessed it, and will bless it still. Now, you may all of you do something like that. I was walking down the Old Kent-road one day, and I was met by an excellent clergyman not now in this neighbourhood. He said to me, "Our places are close to one another, but we don't often meet; come in and pray." We entered his house, walked across the hall into the library, and there down went the two ministers. One prayed, and then the other prayed. We then rose, shook hands, and parted. It took us but ten minutes, but it was worth I know not how much to us both.

We went to our work refreshed, for we had been with God. When we meet for this purpose God will be with us, and he will give us all that are in the ship if we will but ask him; for it is by prayer, prayer, prayer, that we shall prevail. Let us wrestle and agonise until he gives us our desire.

Ah! there may be some of you that are praying for yourselves, but have not got the answer yet. There was a mother who went to hear George Whitefield preach—that mighty man of God. After the sermon was over the mother was convinced of sin. In deep anguish of spirit she went home. Her husband was dead, and she had only a little girl, and having no one else to talk to, she told the girl about her convictions. The little girl—you will think it strange perhaps—under the recital was made to feel the same. Mother and child wept together under the same sense of sin. Upstairs they went and prayed. They neither of them found peace for some months; but it pleased God at last to give mother and child, who had prayed together, peace at the same time. While the mother was rejoicing, the child, just like a babe in grace, said, "Mother, O what a joyful thing it is to be pardoned! What a blessed thing it is to be saved! I would like to run and tell our neighbours." "No," said the mother, "that would not be wise, child: they don't care about these things; they would not understand; they would laugh at you; and we must not cast pearls before swine. We will do it by-and-by." "But, mother," said the child, "I can't leave it: I do feel so happy, mother, I must tell somebody; so I will just run across the street to the shoemaker, and tell him." The shoemaker was at

work with his lapstone, and the little one began with saying, "Do you know you are a sinner? I am a sinner, but I am a pardoned sinner. I have been seeking Christ and I have found him." She then set forth the tale with tears in her eyes, till the shoemaker set down his hammer to listen, and stopped his work awhile. He became converted, and the story was told abroad, and through the conversion of that man the work spread, a meeting was established, and the means of grace were soon set up, and there arose a flourishing church in that town, where not a believer in Christ had been known to live before. Ah! you young converts, you may tell the tale; even you that are under conviction of sin—you may tell it to your children. Do not hesitate to let the light shine, I pray you—any of you; but I do conjure you by the blood and by the wounds of him who was crucified for our sins—by him that lived and died for us, never to cease praying till God gives you all them that sail with you. O! my dear friends, pray for the congregations that come to the Tabernacle. Make this to be the burden of your never-ceasing cry—"Give us all them that sail with us!" The Lord hear our prayers, and add his blessing on our labours, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Silken Cords.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."—
HOSEA xi. 4.

NO man ever does come to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved, than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly "dead in trespasses and sins," that the same divine power which provided a Saviour must make him willing to accept a Saviour, or else saved he never will be. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot move herself, however, into the water. You see a tree; it is growing; it brings forth branch, leaf, and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log; and if the tree, which hath life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone. "Without me ye can do nothing," is true of believers, but it is just as true, and with a profounder emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come. But many make a mistake about Divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads,

and drags them to heaven, whether they will or not; and that when the time comes they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God; for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled.

> "Convince a man against his will,
> He's of the same opinion still."

As the old proverb says, one man may bring a horse to the water, but twenty men cannot make him drink; so a man may be brought to know what repentance is, and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. Nay, God himself doth not do it by compulsion. He hath respect unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acteth with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, he doth not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify himself, he uses means to show forth his glory—not such as are fit for beasts, or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this—"I drew them with cords;" not the cords that are fit for bullocks, but "with the cords of a man." Not the cart-ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man; and, as if to explain himself, he puts it—"I drew them with bands of love." Love is that power which acts upon man. There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by sovereign grace. Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no

man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are cords of a man. The bands he employs are bands of love.

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try—and may the Lord enable me—to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens round the sinners' hearts. I may be the means in his hands of putting these cords round you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all one's might at that rope. So it may be we shall introduce the arguments, and by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in his infinite mercy, to pull these cords, and then your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will, to come and lay hold upon eternal life.

Some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true believers.

A believer is the happiest being out of heaven. In some respects he is superior to an angel, for he hath a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son, and has the spirit of adoption in him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them, and you will always find them cheerful. If for a moment a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment, and soon they rejoice

again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their pathway. Wherever they go they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when they may, it is always for the comfort of others, with kindness upon their lips, and the law of love upon their hearts. Some young persons, watching such Christians as these, are led to say, "I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful, as they are; they always have a smile upon their face." And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus, being drawn by that cord of love. And, oh! let me say to you, dear friend, it is a most fitting cord with which to draw you; for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning, and go with you into your business—that shall be with you at night, and close your eyes in tranquil slumber; a peace that shall enable you to live, and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death—nay, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream —be a Christian. My testimony is, that if I had to die like a dog; if this life were all, and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian for the joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. Godliness with contentment is great gain. It hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Thou wouldst be happy, young man; then do not kill thy happiness. Thou wouldst have a bright eye; then do not put it out. Thou wouldst rejoice with joy unspeakable; then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow thine every act. Wouldst

thou be happy, come to Jesus. Let this cord of love sweetly draw thee.

Another cord of love—it was the one which brought me to the Saviour—is the sense of the security of God's people, and a desire to be as secure as they. I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but safe things always have I loved. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things—things that I can see to be made of rock, and that will bear the test of time, I lay hold on with avidity. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit:—Scripture tells me that he that believeth in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity too. There will be no fear of my ever being in hell; I shall run no risk as to my eternal state; that will be secure for ever. I shall have the certainty that when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ, and behold him in glory. Whenever I heard the doctrine of the final preservation of the saints preached, my mouth used to water to be a child of God. When I heard the old saints sing that hymn—

> "My name from the palms of his hands
> Eternity cannot erase;
> Impressed on his heart it remains,
> In marks of indelible grace.
> Yes, I to the end shall endure,
> As sure as the earnest is given;
> More happy, but not more secure,
> Are the glorified spirits in heaven."—

my heart was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, "O that I had a part and lot in such a salvation as that!" Now, young man, what do you

think of this band of love? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it—to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin, and that, by the grace of God, in a moment? "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." What say you to this? doth not this attract you? doth not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner—draw the sinner by the sweet allurement of security, and let him say, "I will lay hold on Christ to-night."

Certain Christians will tell you that they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives, not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable, that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighbouring dove-cotes into his own, took a dove and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew, and all her fellow doves observed her, and, attracted by the sweet incense, they flew after her, and the dove-cote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus, and wherever they go—such is their kindness and their consistency; their gentleness and yet their honesty; their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus, that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, and they say, "Where does he dwell, for I would fain see him and love him too?" I am afraid I cannot attract you, sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men.

Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be—what her life of devotedness to God was; and I charge you by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul, and the yearning of her bowels towards you, let your mother's example be one of the cords of a man to draw you towards God. Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord be round about you, and the Lord pull at it, I will have good hope that you will close with Christ to-night.

You see, we only show the cord, and then we leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. But now for another. We believe that not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received. The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps even in the River Thames he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand, and yet he has been himself unharmed. The traveller has escaped from a terrific railway accident, himself picked out of the *débris* of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared; or he himself has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come; but just then God interposed in a gracious Providence, and forthwith a strong tide of prosperity set in. Some have thought over these things and said, "Is God so good to me, and shall I not love him? Shall I live every day despising him who thus tenderly watches over me, and graciously provides for my wants?" O! sirs, methinks this cord of love ought to fall about some of you. How good has

God been to you, dear hearer. I will not tell your case out in public; but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, "How graciously has Providence dealt with me!" Give the Lord thy heart, young man. Thou canst do no less for such favour as he has shown thee. Mother, give Jesus thy heart; he well deserves it, for he has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate—may the Lord help thee to do it!—consecrate thy heart's warmest affections to him who hath thus generously dealt with thee in Providence. He deserves it, doth he not? Wilt thou be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something in thee that says —"Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a friend; be reconciled; be reconciled to God by the death of his Son"? May that cord lay hold of some of you, and may God draw it, and so attract you to himself.

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be your mode of thinking of things, but it strikes me, if I had not laid hold of Christ now, if anybody should meet me and say,—"The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world," I should lend him my ear for a little time, and ask him to show it me. I have frequently caught the ears of travellers, and held them fast bound, when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just. That is granted. If God be just, sin must be punished. That is clear. How can God be just, and yet not punish the sinner? There is the question. The gospel answers that question. It declares that Christ the Son of God became a man; that he stood in the room, place, and stead of such men as were chosen

of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place and stead of those whom I will now call believers. He suffered at God's hand everything that was due to God from them. Nay, he did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God's law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them; and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ to save them. Christ's sufferings are put in the stead of their being sent to hell, and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ's righteousness is put in the stead of their keeping the law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in Paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy. Now, it strikes me that that looks reasonable enough. In everyday life we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia; he pays for a substitute, and he himself goes free. A man owes a debt; some friend comes in and discharges the bill for him, and he himself is clear. The ends of justice are answered through substitution. Now, there seems to me to be something so unique about the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God's suffering in man's form for man that justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery and cries, "I would have an interest in it; Lord, let me be one of those for whom Jesus died; let me have the peace which springs from a complete atonement wrought out by Jesus Christ." My brother, I wish I could draw thee with this; but I cannot. I can only show thee this cord and tell thee how well it would draw thee. If thou rejectest it, thy blood shall be upon thine own head. I know too well thou

wilt reject it, unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love and draw thee to Jesus.

A far larger number, however, are doubtless attracted to Jesus by a sense of his exceeding great love. It is not so much the reasonableness of the atonement as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived in the city of London, in the days of Queen Mary, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fine, and imprisonment, and death for the truth's sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler —a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler, and was in the habit of giving him all his work to do, and recommending him to many friends. And as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table, and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus, had often advanced him sums of money, and had acted with great kindness, a reward was offered to any one who would betray a Lollard, or would discover such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skilful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave—freely forgave—the cobbler, and never said a word to him about it; but in the streets the cobbler would always turn his head the other way, and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still the merchant never

altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual, and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before; but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him. One day, in a very, very narrow lane in the city—for the streets were narrow, and narrower still were the lanes—the merchant saw the cobbler coming, and he thought, "Now is my time; he cannot pass me now without facing me." Of course the cobbler grew very red in the face, and made up his mind that if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, "I am very sorry that you shun me; I have no ill-will towards you; I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you." The cobbler stopped, and presently a moisture suffused his eyes; and anon a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said,—"I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you never would forgive me; I have always shunned you, but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, sir, assure me of your forgiveness." Forthwith he began to fall upon his knees. That was the way to draw him with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. And in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy; he has proclaimed to you eternal life, and you reject it. Every day he gives you of his bounties, makes you to feed at the table of his Providence, and clothes you with the livery of his generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse

him; you break his Sabbaths; you despise his name; you are his enemies. And yet, what does he say to you? He loves you still; he follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo, and to entreat you to come to him, and have him for a friend. Can you hold out against my Master's wounds? Can you stand out against his bloody sweat? Can you resist his passion? O! can you? By the name of him who bowed his head upon the tree—who cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—can you hold out against him? If he had not died for me, I think I must love him for dying for other people. But he has died for you; you may know this if you trust him now with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that he died for you. Oh! may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man.

There are many more cords, but my strength fails me, and therefore I will mention but one more.

The privileges which a Christian enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ. Do you know what will take place in these aisles to-night if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. I will tell you. There he stands. He is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it; he is wretched; he has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ to-night, his sins will roll off from him at once; they will roll into the sepulchre of Jesus, and be buried, and never have a resurrection. In a moment he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment. The kiss of a Father's love shall be upon his cheek, and the seal of the Spirit's witness shall be fixed upon his brow.

He shall be made, to-night, a child of God, a joint-heir with Christ. He shall be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home. And when he gets home, it may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for; while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a hell upon earth, will live a life like heaven begun below; and all this shall take place in an instant. Nay, that is not all. The effect of this night's work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus; so that when the time shall come that his hair is grey, and he must lay stretched upon his bed and breathe out his last, he shall in his last moments look back upon a path that has been lit with the grace of God, and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fulness as a creature can endure. This is enough, surely, to tempt a sinner to come to Jesus. This must be a strong cord to draw him. O man! Jesus will accept you; he will accept you now, just as you are. Thousands he has received like you; let heaven's music witness to the fact. Thousands like you he receiveth still. Some of us can bear our testimony to that. Come and welcome, then; come and welcome. Never mind thy rags, prodigal; a Father's

hand will take them off; never mind thy filth; never mind thy having fed the swine. Come as thou art; come just now.

I hear somebody saying, "Well! I am inclined to come, but I do not know what it means." To come, then, is to trust. You have been trying to save yourself. Do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the commandments; but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them, and no man ever will keep them. You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has hard labour. You have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars, and you are not an inch higher. After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off; have done with it. Christ did keep the law; let his keeping it stand in the stead of your keeping it. Christ did suffer the anger of God; let his sufferings stand to you in the stead of your sufferings. Take him now, just as you are, and believe that he can save you—nay, that he will save you—and trust him to do it. It is all the gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who inquire for something new. I cannot give it to you; I have not got anything new, but only the same old tale over and over again. Trust Christ and you are saved. We have heard in our church-meetings, that, on several occasions, when at the close of the sermon I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace; and, therefore, we will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ to-night, but I know not

what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment. But damned you must be except you lay hold on Christ. Doth not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter. But you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ. Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fears, and suspense, and doubt, and anxiety. It would be a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow, and say, "I do not care whether I wake or not;" to go to sea, and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whether you reach land or no. Nay, sometimes the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here. Do you not wish for that? But you can never have it except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you? My dear hearers, you whose faces I look upon every Sunday, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that to some of you this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do, and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you remove to other towns, it gives me pain to lose your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years—you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship's company should meet on the other side of the

sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near; neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in heaven unless we meet in Jesus Christ. We cannot meet father, and mother, and pastor, and friends, unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord. Will not that cord of love draw you? Mother, from the battlements of heaven a little angel is looking down to-night, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you, and he is saying, "Mother, follow your babe to heaven." Father, your daughter charged you as she died, to give your heart to Christ, and from her seat in heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick bed, I trust, "Follow me, follow me to heaven." Friends who have gone before—godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus—in one chorus, say to you, "Come up hither; come up hither, for we without you cannot be made perfect." Will not this band of love draw you? O! will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you, and bring you to the Saviour's feet? The Lord grant it may; but as I have said, I can only show the cords. It is his to pull them; and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord do it, for his love's sake. Amen.

The True Aim of Preaching.

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts xiii. 38.

PAUL'S mode of preaching, as illustrated by this chapter, was first of all to appeal to the understanding with a clear exposition of doctrinal truth, and then to impress that truth upon the emotions of his hearers with earnest and forcible exhortations. This is an excellent model for revivalists. They must not give exhortation without doctrine, for if so, they will be like men who are content with burning powder in their guns, but have omitted the shot. It is the doctrine we preach, the truth we deliver, which God will make a power to bless men. However earnest and zealous we may be in speaking, if we have not something weighty and solid to say, we shall appear to be earnest about nothing, and shall not be at all likely to create a lasting impression. Paul, if you notice, through this chapter, first of all gives the history of redemption, tells the story of the cross, insists upon the resurrection of the Saviour, and then he comes to close and personal dealings with the souls of men, and warns them not to neglect this great salvation.

At the same time it was not all doctrine and no exhortation, but or ever Paul wound up his discourse and left the synagogue, he made a strenuous, pointed, personal appeal to those who had listened to him. Let such of our brethren as are passionately fond of mere doctrine, but having little of the marrow of divine mercy or the milk of human kindness in their souls, do not care to have the Word pressed upon the consciences of men, stand rebuked by the example of the Apostle Paul. He knew well that even truth itself must be powerless unless applied. Like the wheat in the basket, it can produce no harvest till it be sown broadcast in the furrows. We cannot expect that men will come and make an application of the truth to themselves. We must, having our hearts glowing and our souls on fire with love to them, seek to bring the truth to bear upon them personally, to impress it upon their hearts and consciences, as in the sight of God and in the stead of Christ.

The subject to which Paul drew attention, the target at which he was shooting all his arrows, was *forgiveness of sins through the man Christ Jesus.* That is the subject to which I now want to address your attention, and when I have spoken upon it as my leading theme, I shall have a few words to add about *his audience*, and *what became of them.*

Paul's Subject was superlative—the subject of subjects—the great master-doctrine of the Christian ministry—"*Be it* known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is *preached unto you forgiveness of sins.*" The "forgiveness of sins" is a topic which will be more or less interesting to every

one of my hearers, in proportion as he feels that he has committed sins, the guilt of which appals his conscience. To those good people among you who fold your arms and say, "I have done no wrong either to God or man," I have nothing to say. You need no physician, for you are not sick. You evidently would not be thankful for the heavenly eye-salve, for you are not blind. The wealth that Christ can bring you will not induce you to bow the knee to him, for already you think yourselves to be rich and increased in goods. But I shall be quite sure of the ear of the man whose sins have been a burden to him. If there be one here who wants to be reconciled to God, who says with the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my Father," I shall not need to study how to fit my words; let them come out as they may, the theme itself will be sure to enlist the attention of such an one, who says—

> "How can I get my sins forgiven?
> How can I find my way to heaven?"

While we attempt to tell him that, we shall ensure his attention.

This is our aim; and this will we do if God permit. The Christian minister tells men the ground of pardon; the exclusive method (for there is a monopoly in this matter), the exclusive method by which God will pardon sin. "*Through this man,*" says the text; that is to say, God will pardon, but he will only pardon in one way—through his Son Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus has a monopoly of mercy. If you will depend upon the uncovenanted mercy of God, the mercy of God apart from Christ, you shall find that you have depended upon a reed, and built your house upon the

sand. Into the one silver pipe of the atoning sacrifice God has made to flow the full current of pardoning grace. If you will not go to that, you may be tempted by the *mirage*, you may think that you can drink to the full, but you shall die disappointed. You must die, unless you come for salvation to Christ. What does he say himself? "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture." "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned, but he that believeth not"—may he go right too? No, he "is condemned already, because he believeth not." "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." These are Christ's own words, not mine. He that believeth shall be saved, "but he that believeth not shall be"—what? Pardoned for his unbelief? No; "*shall be damned!*" There is no alternative. The expression might seem harsh if I were the inventor of it, but as it came from the lips of the man Christ Jesus, who was the gentlest, meekest, and most tender of men, God forbid that I should affect a charity of which the Lord himself made no profession. "He that believeth not shall be damned." God presents mercy to the sons of men, but he has chosen to present it in one channel—through that man who died for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God.

Wherefore is it that forgiveness comes to us alone through Jesus Christ? The whole economy of redemption supplies us with an answer. The man Christ Jesus is a divine person. He is the Son of God. You will never doubt that reconciliation is an effect of infinite wisdom, if you once clearly understand the condition that made it requisite. Though his people

were objects of God's everlasting love, their sins had kindled his fierce anger, as it were an unquenchable fire. Inasmuch as God is just, he must from the necessity of his nature punish sin. Yet he willed to have mercy upon the fallen sons of men. Therefore it was that Christ came into this world. Being God, he was made man for our sakes. He suffered from the wrath of God that which we, the offending sinners, ought to have suffered. God exacted from the man Christ Jesus that which he must otherwise have exacted from us. Upon his dear devoted head was laid the curse; upon his bare back fell the scourge that must have tortured our souls throughout eternity. Those hands of his, when nailed to the tree, smarted with our smart. That heart bled with our bleeding. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed; surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Substitution, then, is the cause of it all. God will forgive sin, because the sin which he forgives has been already atoned for by the sufferings of his dear Son. You know, many of you, the story in old Roman history, of the young man who had violated discipline, and was condemned to die. But his elder brother, a grand old soldier, who had often been to the front in the battles of the Republic, came and exposed his breast and showed his many scars, and exhibited his body covered with the orders and insignia and honours of his country, and he said, "I cannot ask life for my brother on account of anything that he has ever done for the Republic; he deserves to die, I know, but I set my scars and my wounds before you as the price of his

life, and I ask you whether you will not spare him for his brother's sake;" and with acclamation it was carried that for his brother's sake he should live. Sinner, this is what Christ does for you. He points to his scars, he pleads before the throne of God. "I have suffered the vengeance due to sin; I have honoured thy righteous law; for my sake have mercy upon that unworthy brother of mine!" In this way, in no other way, is forgiveness of sins preached to you through this man Christ Jesus.

It is our business also to preach to you the instrument through which you may obtain this pardon. We read the question in your anxious eyes—"Now I can understand that Christ, having stood a substitute, has received from God power to pardon human souls, but how can I obtain the benefit; how can I draw near to him?" Didst thou never read how Moses described the righteousness of faith? and Paul has endorsed his description. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep?" Thou hast no call to climb so high or dive so low. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. That is the word of faith which we preach." Thou hast no need to go home to get at Christ. Thou hast no need even to come here to find him. He is accessible at all hours, and in all places—the ever-present Son of God. "But wherewithal shall I come to him?" says one. Oh! thou needest not torture thy body; thou needest not afflict thy soul; thou needest not bring thy gold and silver; thou needest not bring even thy tears. All that thou hast to do is to come to him as thou art, and trust in him where thou art. Oh! if thou wilt believe that he

is the Son of God, and that he is able to save to the uttermost, and if thou wilt cast thyself upon him with thy whole weight—falling upon him, leaning upon him, resting upon him with that simple recumbency which needs and lacks no other support, thou shalt be saved. Now cling to the cross, thou shipwrecked sinner, and thou shalt never go down while clinging to that. Here is the life-belt, and if thou art enabled by the Holy Ghost to put thy sole and simple reliance upon Christ, earth's pillars may totter, and the lamps of heaven be extinguished, but thou shalt never perish, neither shall any pluck thee out of Christ's hand. Trust Jesus; that is the way of salvation. "What!" says one, "if I trust Christ at this moment, shall I have my sins forgiven?" Ay, forgiven now. "What! if I just rest in Christ, and look to him?" Even so. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

> "There is life for a look at the crucified one,
> There is life at this moment for thee;
> Then look, sinner, look unto him and be saved,
> To him who was nailed to the tree!"

You will be saved, not by repentings and tears; not by wailings or workings; not by doings or prayings; but coming, believing, simply depending upon what Jesus Christ has done. When thy soul saith by faith what Christ said in fact—"It is finished," thou art saved, and thou mayest go thy way rejoicing.

We have thus preached God's way of pardon, and man's way of getting at God's pardon; but we are also enjoined to preach about *the character of this forgiveness of sin*. Never had messengers such happy tidings to deliver. When God pardons a man's sins, he pardons

them all. He makes a clean sweep of the whole. God never pardons half a man's sins, and leaves the rest in his book. He has pardon for all sin at once. I believe that virtually before God all the sins of the believer were so laid to the account of Christ, that no sins ever can be laid to the believer's door. The apostle does not say "Who *does* lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" but "Who *shall?*" as though nobody ever could. I am inclined to think that John Kent's words are literally true—

> "Here's pardon for transgressions past;
> It matters not how black their caste;
> And, O my soul! with wonder view,
> For sins to come there's pardon too!"

It is a full pardon. God takes his pen, and writes a receipt. Though the debt may be a hundred talents, he can write it off; or be it ten thousand, the same hand can receipt it. Luther tells us of the devil appearing to him in a dream, and bringing before him the long roll of his sins, and when he recited them, Luther said—"Now write at the bottom, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin'"—Oh, that blessed word "all"!—"from all sin"—great sins and little sins; sins of our youth, and sins of our grey hairs; sins by night and sins by day; sins of action and passion, sins of deed and thought—all gone! Blessed Saviour! Precious blood! Omnipotent Redeemer! Mighty Red Sea that thus drowns every Egyptian! It is a full pardon and it is *a free* pardon likewise. God never pardons any sinner from any other motive than his own pure grace. It is all gratis. It cost the Saviour much; but it costs us nothing. It

is a pardon freely given by a God of grace, because he delighteth in mercy. There is too this further blessing about it, that while it is full and free, it is also *irreversible.* Whom God pardons he never condemns. Let him once say, "*Absolvo te*"—"I absolve thee,"—and none can lay anything to our charge. We have heard of men who, after having been pardoned for one offence, have committed another, and therefore they have had to die; but when the Lord pardons us, he prevents our going away to our old corruption. He puts his Spirit in us, and makes new men of us, so that we find we cannot do what we used to do. That mighty grace of God is without repentance. God never repents of having bestowed his grace. Do not believe those who tell you that he loves you to-day and hates you to-morrow. Oh, beloved! once in Christ, in Christ for ever; the devil cannot get you out of him. Get into the sacred clefts, sinner, of that Rock of Ages which was cleft for you, and out of it the fiends of hell can never drag you. You are safe when once you get into that harbour. Get Christ, and you have got heaven. All things are yours when Christ is yours. Full pardon, free pardon, and everlasting pardon, and let me tell you *present* pardon. It is a notion still current that you cannot know you are forgiven till you come to die. When people talk thus, it shows how little they know, or rather, how much they do not know about it. There be some here who can bear witness; nay, there be millions of God's people who, if they could speak from heaven, would tell you that they knew their pardon long years before they entered into rest. If

you had ever been shut up in prison, as some of us were—five long years it was with me a bitter agony of soul, when nothing but hell stared me in the face, when neither night nor day had I peace—oh, what joy when I heard that precious truth, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!" I felt the pardon really announced to me! I was as conscious of pardon as this hand is conscious of being clean after I have washed it; as conscious of being accepted in Christ at that moment as I am now sure that I am able to stand here and say as much with my mouth. A man may have this infallible witness of the Holy Ghost. I know that to some stolid minds it will always seem fanaticism, but what do I care whether it seems fanaticism to them or not, as long as it is real to my heart. We count ourselves as honest as others, and have as much right to be believed; whether they credit our sanity and our sincerity or not does not affect us a straw, so long as we know that we have received the grace. If you reckoned a clear profit of ten thousand pounds upon some speculation, and somebody said to you, "It's all foolery!" the proof would be unanswerable if you had received the amount and had the bank notes in your house; then you would say, "Ah! you may think as you like about it, but I have got the cash." So the Christian can say. Being justified by faith we have peace with God—"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." When some tell him that he is not forgiven, he says, "Oh! you may say what you like about it; but I have got the witness

within that I am born of God. I am not what I used to be; if I were to meet myself in the street I should hardly know myself; I mean my spiritual self—my inner self, for I am so changed, so renewed, so turned upside down, that I am not what I was; I am a new man in Christ Jesus." The man who can say this can bear to be laughed at. He knows what he is about, and at the coolest and most sober moment of his life, even when lying on his sick bed and ready to die, he can look into eternity, soberly judge of Christ, and find him to be worthy of his confidence, and, thinking of the blood-washing, find it to be a real fact. There are a thousand things in this world that look well enough till you come to look upon them in the prospect of the grave; but this is a thing that looks better the nearer we get to eternity; the more solemnly and deliberately we take our account of it in the sight of God, the more substantial it appears. Oh, yes! there is a present pardon; but what I want to say most emphatically is, that there is a present pardon for you. "Who is that?" say you. Oh! I am not going to pick and choose from the midst of you. Whosoever among you will come to Christ, believe his word, and put your trust in himself, there is instant pardon for you. What! that grey-headed man there, seventy years old in sin? Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord! If he should now rest in Christ, there is instantaneous pardon for him. And is there a harlot here? Is there a drunkard here? Is there one here who has cursed God? Is there one here who has been dishonest? Is there one here over whom all these sins have rolled? Why, if thou believest, thy sins, which

are many, are all forgiven thee. And though there should be brought before us one so guilty that we might well start away from approaching him, yet if he can but trust Christ, Christ will not start away from him, but will receive him. Oh! was not that a wonderful moment when the Saviour wrote on the ground, while the woman taken in adultery stood before him, as all her accusers, being convicted by their own consciences, went out, leaving the sinner and the Saviour alone together, and when Jesus Christ, who hated all kinds of sin, but who loved all kinds of sinners, lifted himself up and said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"? Ah, poor sinner! Jesus Christ does not condemn you. If you condemn yourselves, he never will condemn you. He will only condemn your sin, for that is what he hates; but he does not hate you. If you and your sins part, Christ and you shall never part. If you will but trust him now, you shall find him able to save you even to the very uttermost from all these sins of yours, which have become your plague and your burden. God help you, then, at once to trust him, and to find this present pardon—this pardon which will last you for ever, and which you may have now.

Let me repeat it again, though I said it before, all this will be good news only to those who want pardon, and not for those who do not require it. I have nothing to say to those who do not want it. Why should I? "The whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick." God will have something to say to you one of these days. I recollect, and I hope you have not forgotten, the story of the rich man. It is more than allegory, it is fact. You all know that

while he was in this world he had fared sumptuously every day. He was covered with purple and fine linen, or at least he thought so. As for God's child, Lazarus, he thought he was a poor miserable beggar, only fit to be with the dogs, and he despised him. He looked at him, and said, "Oh! I am a gentleman; I am dressed in purple and fine linen; I am none of your beggarly saints lying on the dunghill, though they call themselves saints, and much beside; I am rich." Now, it so happened that he did not see himself; he had got scales over his eyes. But he found it out one day. You remember Christ's words, "In hell he lifted up his eyes." Ah! and he saw then what he had never seen before. All that he had ever seen went for naught, there had been a glamour over his eyes; he had been dazed and benighted. He had been the beggar all the while, if he had but known it, while Lazarus, who had worn the beggar's garb, is waited on like a prince, and carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. So the poor beggar covered with wounds and sores, who thinks he is only fit for the dunghill, he is the man Christ will have; he is the man Christ will take up to heaven at last. As for your self-righteous men, who think themselves so good and excellent, they will be like the tinsel and the gilt, and will all be burned up in the fire; the varnish and paint will all come off; God will knock the masks off their faces, and let the leprosy that was on their brow be seen by all men. But, sinner, you who are such, and who know it—unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins, through the man Christ Jesus.

LET THE CONGREGATION TO WHICH PAUL ADDRESSED

HIMSELF, AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM, now engage our attention for a few minutes.

The text says, "Unto *you* is preached forgiveness of sins." Never mind the Jews and Gentiles to whom Paul preached. The verse is quite as applicable here as it was there. "*Unto you* is preached the forgiveness of sins." My dear friend, it is no small privilege to be where the message of the forgiveness of sins can yet be heard. Unto *you* is preached the forgiveness of sins, but not to the tens of thousands who have gone the way of all flesh, unpardoned and unsaved. How is it that you are spared? Your brother is dead; your children have, some of them, died; but you are spared. You have been at sea. You have been in peril. You have had the fever. You have been near death; and yet here you are kept alive. Is not this a privilege, that unto *you* is preached the forgiveness of sins? What would they give to hear it once more? What would they give to have another opportunity? But it has been said of them—

"Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now."

"Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins." I said that this was a privilege! but it is a privilege which some of you have despised. Those who heard Paul had never heard it before. Many of you have heard it from your youth up. Alas! I cannot help saying of some of you—that I am almost ready to despair of your conversion. You do not improve. All the exhortations in the world are to you as if they were spoken to an iron column or a brazen wall! Why will ye die? What shall be done unto you? What shall be said

you? Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins. When you die, careless, Christless, unsaved one—when we throw that handful of dirt upon your coffin-lid, we shall have to think, "Ah! that man is lost, and yet unto him was preached the forgiveness of sins!"

Well, but it is still preached unto you. Notwithstanding that you have neglected the privilege, it is still preached unto you. Fain would I point with my finger to some of you, and say, "Well, now, we really do mean you personally. You people under the gallery whom I cannot see, and you upstairs here—every one of you—unto *you* is preached the forgiveness of sins. God has not sent us to preach to your neighbours, but to you—you, Mary, Thomas, George, John, Sarah—you, you personally—unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins, and it rests with you now to consider what reception shall be given to the message of mercy. Shall a hard heart be the only answer? Oh, may the Spirit of God come upon you, and give instead thereof a quickened conscience and a tender heart, that you may be led to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"And WHAT BECAME OF THEM," do you ask, "TO WHOM THE WORD WAS PREACHED WITH SUCH THRILLING EARNESTNESS?"

Some of them raved at a very great rate. If you read through the chapter you will find that they were filled with envy, and they spoke against those things that were declared to them by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, and so on, until Paul shook off the dust of his feet against them, and went his way.

But there was another class. The 48th verse says,

that "When the Gentiles heard, they were glad, and they glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed." Ah, that is the comfort; albeit there are some who, whenever the gospel is preached, dislike and reject it. A person was once very angry with me, because, in preaching on the natural depravity of man, I had charged man with being depraved; I had said that man was proud. This man would not confess it. Thereby he was proving the truth of the assertion as regarded himself all the while. So proud was he that he could not bear to hear the truth told him about it. If he had said he was proud, I should have thought I had made a mistake; but when he bridled up, and got into an angry temper, I knew that God had sent me to tell him the truth. Outspoken truth makes half the world angry. The light distracts their eyes. When the Jews kicked against Paul's preaching, did Paul feel disappointed? Oh, no! If he did feel depressed for a moment, there was a strong cordial at hand—that very cordial by reason of which Jesus rejoiced in spirit as he saw the good-will of the Father, in revealing unto babes those things that are hid from the wise and prudent. Here was his comfort—there were some upon whom there had been a blessed work; there were some whose names were written in the book of God; some concerning whom there had been covenant transactions; some whom God had chosen from before the foundation of the world; some whom Christ had bought with blood, and whom the Spirit, therefore, came to claim as God's own property, because Christ had bought them upon the bloody tree, and those "some" believed. Naturally

they were like others, but grace made the distinction, and their faith was the sign and evidence of that distinction. Now, you need not ask the question whether you are God's elect. I ask another question—Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If you do, you are his elect: if you do not, the question is not to be decided yet by us. If you are God's chosen ones, you will know it by your trusting in Jesus. Simple as that trust is, it is the infallible proof of election. God never sets the brand of faith upon a soul whom Christ has not bought with his blood, and if thou believest, all the treasure of eternity is thine; thy name is in God's book; thou art a favoured one of heaven; the divine decrees all point to thee; go thy way and rejoice.

But if thou believest not, thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. May eternal mercy bring thee out of that state, yea, bring thee out of it at once. Oh that I had time and power to plead with some here who know that Christ died, who know that he can save, who know the gospel, but who still do not trust in that gospel for their salvation! Oh, may you be led to do it, and to do it now, before this day is over! We want to be made a blessing among you. At the commencement of our prayers we besought the Lord for the conversion of many more beside you. If we had these souls given to us, what a token would it be, and what a comfort! May the Lord bring you in, and bring you in without delay! Oh, trust him, soul—trust him! May God help you to trust him, and his shall be the praise, world without end!

A Vision of the Field.

"For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 9.

THESE words were addressed to the mountains of Palestine. Albeit that they are now waste and barren, they are yet to be as fruitful and luxuriant as in the days of Israel's grandeur. God will turn to them, and the vines shall then crown the summits, and there shall be harvests again upon the mountain tops. The mountains of Israel were a soil of glass, in which you could see reflected at a single glimpse, the condition and character of the people. While the Israelites were obedient to God, the mountains dropped with new wine, and the little hills seemed to melt with fertility. Honey dropped from the rock, and wine appeared to be distilled of the very flint. As soon as ever the people sinned, God gave them over to their enemies, and straightway, irrigation being neglected, and the culture of the soil no longer profitable, the mountains became as blank and barren as though they were a howling wilderness. And again, when the people repented and turned to God, then the soil began to cover the mountains, carried up there by the industry of the people, the sides of the

hills were terraced, the waste places began to blossom, and the vines were once more filled with clusters. You could thus read the history of the people in the aspect of their hills.

I intend to take the hills of Israel as a representation of our own state—the state of our own heart. As they really did mirror forth the condition of the people of old, the metaphor becomes peculiarly attractive. Man's heart by nature is like a waste field; there is no hope for that field unless God turn to it in mercy; and when he doth turn to it he will have to till it; for not until after tillage can it be sown with any hope of success.

I. *Man's heart by nature is like a waste field.* A waste field produces no harvest. Reaper, thou shalt never fill thine arms with sheaves, the axle of the wain shall never creak beneath the load of harvest, and the swains shall never dance with the maidens at the harvest home. There let the field abide, and the fruit it will yield in a whole century will not be sufficient to feed a single individual. Such is man, we say, by nature. He brings forth no fruit unto God. Leave him alone and he will live unto himself. Perhaps he will be a respectable sinner, and, if so, he will selfishly spend all his life in trying to provide for himself alone, or for his family, which is but a part of himself. He will go through the world from his birth to his sepulchre without a thought of God. He will never do anything for God. His heart will never beat with love to him. He may sometimes, out of sheer selfishness, go with others to worship, but he will not worship God, whatever deference he may show to the outward form. His

heart will be in perfect alienation from the God that made him. He will live and he will die a strange monstrosity in the world—a creature that has lived without his Creator. Perhaps, however, he will be a disreputable sinner. He will live in sin, find his comfort in drunkenness, perhaps in lust, possibly in dishonesty; but anyhow, he will bring forth nothing that God can accept. Methinks I see the great God coming to look at the man, even as a farmer might come to look upon his fallow field. What can God see? Is there a prayer? Yes, he says a few forms of prayer, but they are dead, lifeless things, and God cannot accept them. Does he see any praise? Perhaps a shrivelled hymn growing up in the corner of the field, but since there is no heart in it, that rots and dies, and God abhors it. He looks the whole field through. There is no thought for God, no consecration of time to God, no desire to honour God, no longing to produce in the world fresh glory to God, no effort to raise up to him fresh voices that shall praise his name. He lives unto himself or to his fellow-men, and having so lived, he so dies. Now you know that there are a great many people who say to themselves, "Well, if I do good to my neighbour, and if I am kind to others, that is enough;" and they expect to have some reward. But mark you, every servant expects his master to pay his wages; surely then, if you serve your fellow-men, they ought to reward you. Let them give you a statue, or let them emblazon your name on some one of the rolls of fame. Let them sound down your exploits to future generations. Still let your debtor and creditor account be fair. If you have not done anything distinctly and avowedly

in the service of God, there is no remuneration that you can reasonably expect God to give you. What have you brought forth unto him? Nothing whatever; and we say it sincerely, for we know how sadly true it is, the natural heart of man never does and never can produce so much as one single grain that God can receive as being honourable to him. As for the children of men in all their generations,

> "Like brutes they live, like brutes they die;
> Like grass they flourish, till thy breath
> Blasts them in everlasting death."

Alas for them! Unto thee, great God, they render no prayer nor praise, no heart-felt love nor reverent adoration. They pass through this world as though there was no God.

Worse than this; the field that has never been ploughed or sown does produce something. There is an activity about human nature that will not let us live without doing. Unless you should shut yourselves up in a cell like a monk, or live on the top of a pillar, like Simon Stylites, you cannot very well pass through life utterly inert without any purpose of mind, without any movement of the limbs, without any stir of the passions; and I suppose that even Simon Stylites did exert some influence, for he led other people to be as great fools as himself. And even monks do some mischief by losing the interest on talents for which they ought to have rendered a good account, and spending their time in laziness which they ought to have employed in useful service. "No man liveth to himself." Is there no wheat growing on that soil? no barley? no rye? Very well, then, there will be darnel, and cockle, and twitch, and all sorts of weed.

So it is with the unrenewed heart. It produces hard thoughts of God, enmity against the Most High. It is prolific of evil imaginations, wrong desires, and bitter envyings. As these ripen they bring forth ill words—idle, or, it may be, lascivious words, and perhaps atheistic, blasphemous words; and as these ripen they come to actions, and the man becomes an offender in his deeds, perhaps against man, certainly against God. He lives to produce sour grapes. The apples of Gomorrah hang plentifully upon him.

I know I am describing some here present. There are many such persons to be found in all our assemblies. They have done no good in their lives. Measuring their lives by the standard of God, they have done nothing. On the other hand, they have been guilty of much evil, they have brought forth fruit unto sin. Nor is this the worst of it. The bad farmer, who lets his field all run to weeds, does mischief to the neighbouring farm. Here comes the wind, willing to waft seed—good seed if it can find it—into other soil. It will take the down of the flower seed, and bear it into a garden where it will be wanted; or, if it must, it will carry the seeds of the thistle; and so, when it comes sweeping by the farmer's neglected field it does damage to all the fields in the neighbourhood. It is so with the sinner. "One sinner destroyeth much good." Is he a father? His children grow up to be as ungodly as himself. Is he a master? Then his men, like him, break the Sabbath, and neglect the ways of God. Is he a workman? Then his fellow workmen who are younger than himself take umbrage at his example; they are led into sin while they blindly follow in his wake. Whatever station of life

you put him into, he does mischief; the more eminent he is, the more eminently mischievous. I do not allude now to those who are grave offenders against the laws of society. I mean those good decent people who have no fear of God. I do think they do very much mischief, for the devil's cause gets respectable through having them on its side. Those who persistently live in violation of divine law, and who do not bend their necks to the yoke of Christ, may be very amiable, very moral, and very excellent. If so, in a certain sense, the more is the pity, because they get an increase of power to do evil, for others say, "If such good men as these can live without religion, and live despising it, why should not we?" Thus a bad cause, which would be hissed off the stage if there were none but rascals to side with it, still walks respectably in the light of day because of these persons who back it up. God deliver you, my dear hearers, from being like a field that does mischief unto others! Beware, thou upas tree, lest thy poison get the reward of hell fire! Beware, thou cumberer of the ground, standing there, and sucking nutriment out of the soil, and cursing the other trees of the vineyard, lest the sharp axe should soon feel thy core, and lay thee level with the ground.

A barren field resembles the heart of man in that all the good influences that fall upon it are wasted. Comes there sunshine: it produces no harvest on the fallow land. Here are the precious drops of dew glistening in the morning; but they cannot produce an ear of corn. And here fall the sweet smiling showers of rain, that make the new-mown fields all fragrant, but this field gets no good from it. It is even so with you

by nature. You have the blessings of Providence, but they do not make you grateful. You have even the blessings of the outward means of grace, but they excite no longings in you towards God. Surely, my dear friends, if this has been the case long with you, you must be nigh unto cursing. And yet the waste field does produce something pleasant to the eye—something worth looking at; for have you not seen the gorgeous poppy, and the finest specimens of the ranunculus growing in the field that was never ploughed and sown? And there is the dog-rose yonder, and the foxglove, and the forget-me-not, all springing up, and flourishing where there should have been furrows. And so a man may have a comely appearance and make a fair show in the flesh, although he does not live near to God. In his character and reputation there may be many a gaudy flower—ay, as red and as conspicuous as the poppy. He may shine among men, and men may talk much about him. But, as the Lord liveth, if the Lord's plough has never gone over him, the bright blushing weed is but a weed still; a bane and a pest, not a boon or a balm, as the farmer knoweth right well. Let those of you who are in such a state see an apt emblem of themselves every time they pass a piece of waste ground. Let them look, and say, "That is just what I am, and what I shall be to the end of my life, except the grace of God shall interfere to retrieve me from endless ruin."

II. *There is no hope for this field, unless God turn to it in mercy.* Even so, unless the Lord turn to men, no good will ever come of them. The text says, "I am for you, and I will turn unto you." Man never does of himself turn unto God, and that for obvious reasons.

We are sure he never can, for he is dead *in* trespasses and sins. We are certain he never will, for by nature he hates anything like a new birth; and if he could make himself a new creature he would not, for Christ has expressly said, "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life." Man is unwilling to give up sin, he loves it too well; unwilling to be made holy, for he has no taste for spiritual things. God, then, must come to man; for how can man, being naturally dead, and naturally unwilling, ever come to God? Experience tells us that he will not. When did you ever find a man who had come to God who would say that he came of his own natural inclination? All the saints on earth will tell you that it was mighty grace that made them willing in the day of God's power. If there be any man that came to God of himself, I can only say that I know I am not he.

> "Jesus sought me when a stranger,
> Wandering from the fold of God."

If any unconverted person here will tell me that he can turn to God when he likes, I ask him why he does not turn now. What measure of damnation must be his due, when, according to his own confession, he has a power which he will not use! Sinner, talk not vainly of what thou canst do! Man! thou canst burn in hell, and thou canst fit thyself for the flames, but this is about all thou canst do for thyself. Thou hast destroyed thyself. For that inglorious deed thy will was free and thine agency free likewise. But only in God is thy help found. For this, be sure, thou hast neither might nor skill. If ever thou art saved it must be by another power than thine own, and by another faculty than that which dwells

in thy puny, wicked heart. God must do it. If you wait till your waste field ploughs itself, or brings forth a harvest, you shall wait till doomsday. And if I wait until my hearers save their own souls, and turn unto God themselves, with full purpose of heart, I may wait till these hairs are grey, or till their bones are carried to the tomb. If you have turned, my dear hearers, you know that the Lord has done it. Give unto him the glory. If you have not been converted, God help you to cry unto him instantly and earnestly, "Turn us, and we shall be turned." Look unto him who is exalted on high to "give repentance and remission of sins." Seek ye unto him, and ye shall live. Oh, that ye could now see your wretched plight, that ye could feel your imminent peril, that ye could believe in the sovereign operations of God's grace! Then would I venture to prophesy that salvation had this day come to your house—ay, to your very heart.

III. *When the field is to be put under cultivation it must be tilled.* So when God turns to any man in his mercy there has to be an operation, a tillage, performed upon his heart. The farmer, unless he is a fool, would never think of sowing his corn upon a field that remains just as it was when it lay fallow. He ploughs it first. Although we are to scatter the seed everywhere, upon the wayside as well as upon the good ground, God never does. Common calling is addressed to every man, but effectual calling comes only to prepared men, to those whom God makes "willing in the day of his power."

Now, what is the plough wanted for? Why, it is wanted, first of all, to break up the soil, and make it

crumble. It has got hard; perhaps it is a heavy clay, and then it is all stuck together by the wet, and all baked and caked together by the sun that shines on it. Or perhaps it is a light soil. Well, this may not need much ploughing, but still it will cake over, as we all see even in our little gardens. After the rain has gone, the sun comes, the whole cakes over, and there will be no place for the seeds to thrust in their tender roots. The corn will not sink down into the soil unless the soil is broken, and the more thoroughly pulverised the soil becomes, the more like dust you get it, the more hope there is that the seed will take good root.

In such like manner must human hearts be broken. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The more thoroughly pulverised the heart becomes, the better. Hence there needs to be the sharp plough of the law driven right through the heart, to break up its crust and split the clods; and then must come that blessed plough of the cross, which is the best plough that ever went across a field yet—that blessed plough of the cross, which, as it goes over it, turns up the soil, even the very heart of it, and makes the sinner feel his sin, and hate it too, because of the love of God which is shed abroad by Christ Jesus the Lord. Thus you must be tilled then, that the heart may be broken, for the seed will never get into an unbroken heart. And the plough is also wanted to destroy the weeds, for they must be killed. We cannot have them growing. To spare the weeds would be to kill the wheat. The plough comes, and cuts some weeds in two; others it turns over, and throws the heavy clods on, and leaves them to lie there and be

buried; it turns the roots of others up to the sun, and the sun by the brightness of its shining scorches them, and they die. Some soils need cross-ploughing; they need to be ploughed this way and the other way, and then they need some one to go through the furrows afterwards, and pull up the weeds, or else they will not be all rooted out of the soil. And I am afraid that many of us who have been ploughed have divers weeds left in us yet. The field must not only be ploughed, but the weeds must be killed; and so it must be with you, my dear hearers. If the Lord save you, he must kill your drunkenness, he must kill your swearing, he must kill your whoredom, he must kill your lying, he must kill your dishonesty. These must all go; every single weed must be torn up; there is no hope for you while there is a weed living. True, I mean not those weeds which still exist even in the regenerate; but even they must be doomed now. John Wellman, a member of "the Society of Friends," tells a strange story of himself. One night, after he had been reading the Scripture, as he lay awake, he heard a voice, saying, "John Wellman is dead;" and, being a Quaker, he was greatly struck therewith, and wondered how it was that he could be dead. He asked his wife what his name was, and she said, "John Wellman;" whereupon he perceived that he must be alive. At last, he understood it to mean that he was dead to the world; that he was henceforth no longer what he was, but a new creature in Christ Jesus. Oh! it will be a blessed thing for you, my dear hearers, when the like thing may be said of you in the like sense—"He is dead." There is a man I used to know—I wish I did not know

him so well; I used to meet him every day some years ago. But we parted company. He would not go with me to Christ, and so I went without him. I became a new man, and he is dead. Oh, how often I wish he were buried, for sometimes I have to drag his dead body about with me, and, as it putrifies in my nostrils, I have to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That rascally old man bears my own name; and once he was identical with my own self. I could fain wish he were buried. In like manner may it come to pass with you that you may die to the flesh, that henceforth you may live in the spirit unto God. And though the old man be still prone to corruption, what a blessed stroke is that which takes the life out of him, so that he can no longer reign over you, but the new man reigns supreme.

Ploughmen tell us that when they are ploughing, if the plough jumps, the work is done badly. They must plough it all alike, from end to end, from headland to headland. If the plough jumps, it has gone over some weeds or knots, and not torn them up. Oh! I would like always so to preach that my plough may never jump. I sometimes say a hard word because I do not want my plough to jump. I want to tear up all the knots, and not leave one in the ground. If one sin be tolerated, or one malicious desire be spared, the life of God can never be in us. The Lord make a clean sweep of the weeds, and burn them all!

Well, now, mark you, in this tilling there are different soils. There is the light soil and the heavy soil; and so there are different sorts of constitutions. There are some men who are naturally tender and sensitive.

Many, too, of our sisters are like Lydia; they soon receive the Word. There are others that are like the heavy clay soil; and you know the farmer does not plough both soils alike, or else he would make a sad mess of it. And so God does not deal with all men alike. Some have, as it were, first a little ploughing, and then the seed is put in, and all is done; but some have to be ploughed and cross-ploughed; and then there is the scarifier and the clod-crusher, and I know not what, which have to be rolled over them before they are good for anything; and perhaps, after all, they produce very little fruit. Different constitutions need different modes of action. Let this comfort some of you who have not been so much alarmed as others have been. Different soils must have different methods. Christ does not deal with all men precisely in the same way in his heavenly tillage. A farmer has a large variety of implements. Go into the shed of a man who is a high farmer, and what a number of implements you may see. I mentioned some of them just now, but there are far more than I can talk about. So it is with our heavenly Father; he has all kinds of implements. Sometimes it is a providential trial. One man loses a child; another has to bury his father; and yonder one has had to follow his wife to the grave. Some have temporal losses; business becomes bad; perhaps they are out of work and half starving; others are stretched upon a bed of sickness, and others are brought near to the grave. These circumstances are all so many different sorts of ploughs with which God ploughs the soil of our hearts. The labourers whom the Lord employs are dissimilar likewise by the diversity

of their gifts. Ministers are some of one sort, and some of another; even the same minister is not always engaged in the same sort of operation. There are some Sundays when I know some of you find me a terrible scarifier, for I have the terrors of the Lord in my conscience, and there is very little comfort in the solemn warnings I am constrained to utter. But if sometimes I come down upon you like a clod-crusher, it is needful, that, with true grace and good hope, I may at other times drill in the seed, and nourish your hearts with the very essence of the gospel. The faithful evangelist has to become all things to all men to accomplish his Master's work. But ye must be tilled, for there is no sowing the ground until it has been first stirred about.

And, you know, the farmer has his *time* for ploughing. Some soils will do better at one season, and some at another. There are some soils that break up best after a shower of rain, and some do best when they are dryest. So there are some hearts—ay, and I think almost all hearts—that are best ploughed after a shower of heavenly love has fallen upon them. They are in a grateful frame of mind for mercies received, and then the story of a dying Saviour comes to them as just that which will touch the springs of their hearts. Anyhow, dear friends, I would like to put the question round, Have you been tilled? has your heart been tilled? has your heart been turned up? have the secret things of your heart been discovered and brought to light, just as the plough turns up the ant's nest? have you been brought to know your own corruptions? are there straight furrows right through you, so that you can cry out, "O God, thou hast broken me in

pieces, be pleased to come to my help"? Then I am glad of it. You are ready to despair of yourself, but I am not ready to despair for you. You tremble, but I am encouraged. I rejoice, not that ye are made sorry, but that ye sorrow to repentance after a godly manner. God has broken your heart, and I know that he will bind it up. If he has ploughed you he will sow. "I will turn to you, and ye shall be tilled and sown."

IV. *Unless God has tilled the heart, it cannot be sown with any hope of success.* After ploughing there comes the sowing. When the heart is ready God sows it—sows it with the best of wheat. The wise farmer does not sow tail corn, but, as Isaiah says, he casts in "the principal wheat." The seed which God sows is living seed. If a farmer were to sow boiled seed that has lost its vitality, what would be the good of it? But he sows living seed; and so the truth which Jesus Christ preaches, and bids us to scatter, is living wheat—living seed; and when that drops into the soil God watches over it. The worm may come, and the crow may come, but none of these shall get the seed;

"For grace insures the crop,"

and up it shall spring—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It shall grow, for God has prepared the soil for it.

Now, I want to drop a seed or two. Let me scatter a handful. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ, and you are saved. There—I saw a handful of that go on the way-side; and another handful went upon some of you that are

choked with thorns; but if there be a broken heart here, it has fallen upon good ground, for that broken heart says, "What! if I trust Christ shall I be saved?" Yes, you will—saved in a moment—every sin forgiven you in a moment, for Jesus Christ took your place and stead, and suffered all the punishment of your sins; and therefore God, having been just in punishing Christ instead of you, can let you go free, and yet be as just as though he had sent you to hell. If you trust Christ, the merit of his suffering and the virtue of his righteousness shall be yours now. You shall go your way rejoicing, because you have peace with God through Jesus Christ. Wilt thou believe or not, sinner? God give thee to trust Christ! Trust him now. And if thou dost, then I shall know that God hath ploughed thee, that God hath prepared thee, ere he bade me scatter in the seed. Let those of us who know the power of prayer drag the harrow across the field, for when the seed is once in, it wants harrowing. Thus let us preach the Word, and thus let us pray that the seed may take root, spring up, grow, and bring forth a hundredfold. So we shall be saved, and so God shall be glorified.

The Joy of Harvest.

"They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest."—Isaiah ix. 3.

HARVEST crowns the year with God's goodness. When the harvest is abundant there is universal joy. Everybody rejoices. The owner of the land is glad, because he sees the recompense of reward; the labourers are glad, for they see the fruit of their toil; even those to whom not a single ear may belong nevertheless sympathise in the common joy, because a rich harvest is a boon to all the nation. It is a joyous sight to see the last loaded wain come creaking down the village road, to note the youngsters who shout so loudly, yet know so little what they are shouting about, to mark the peasant on the top of the wain as he waves his hat and gives vent to some gleeful exclamation, and to see them taking it all into the stack or barn. There is joy throughout the village, there is joy throughout the land, when the harvest time is come.

A better joy than this, however, greets the more auspicious season when a sinner finds his Saviour, when the prayers that he has sown like handfuls of seed come up, and the good yellow ears of confidence in his

Saviour are brought to maturity. They that divide the spoil shout loudly, their joyous clamour reaches the heavens, but the joy of those who have found the Saviour is greater than all this; they can say, "Thou art more glorious than all the mountains of prey." Burst, ye barns! overflow, ye wine vats! but ye cannot give such joy to your possessors as Christ, really grasped and laid hold upon, can give to a soul that feels its need of him. The joy of harvest is far exceeded in the joy of simple faith.

We, as a church, like Christian churches in all ages, have had times of ingathering, when we have rejoiced before God, as with the joy of harvest. And there cometh a brighter day than has ever dawned upon this poor misty earth, the day of the coming of the Son of Man, when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise, when he shall thrust in his golden sickle and shall reap the harvest of this world, and then they shall rejoice before him with a greater joy than ten thousand harvest years have ever known.

Let us talk, then, of our own joy at the present time as the joy of harvest. The joy of receiving as members of the church these converts from the world is the joy of realisation, and therefore is like the joy of harvest. Faith realises what she sought and expected. It is an act of faith, in some sort, when the husbandman casts his good seed into the earth to die. He loses sight of it for a long time: it must rot and decay under the clods. It is not quickened except it die. But he believes, he anticipates it will be ultimately to his gain to sustain a loss of those golden handfuls. When he sees the harvest, his faith is honoured and proved to be

sound sense. Thus, too, his cherished hopes are fulfilled. When he first saw the green blade appearing above the soil, he had hope of golden ears; when the whole field grew green, and looked like his own pastures, then he thought full sure that harvest time would come; and each day, as he has walked across his field, or round about it, as he has seen first the blade and then the ear, he has hoped to see the full corn in the ear; and now his hopes are all fulfilled in the harvest before him; his labour is all repaid. Many a time have his workmen plodded to and fro over that ground; it was toilsome drudgery—to plough, to harrow, to sow; there was much weeding, the hoe had to be in frequent use, but now he grudges no labour that has been spent; he has a good return for all his outgoing in the incoming of his harvests. Harvest is the realisation of faith, of hope, and of labour. So with the conversion of souls: we sow the word in faith. How often have I preached the gospel here, and I have felt there was no power whatever in it, of itself, to convert souls, and no power whatever in souls to meet with that word and make it converting to them; but yet I felt and knew that God would honour his good truth, and make it quickening to those whom he had ordained unto eternal life. And you, sitting in these pews and offering your silent prayers, you have hoped it would be so, you have anticipated it; your faith has been exercised with my faith, expecting that God's word would not return unto him void. And I know many of you, anxious men and women, have looked out for results; you have had a quick ear to catch a hopeful word from your own children; you have had a quick eye to notice the eye filled

with tears of any that sat in the same pew with you, and your hope sometimes rose very high and sometimes sank very low; but now that you have seen many of them brought in and added to the Church, you seem to cease to hope, and you bless God that his word has been honoured, that souls have been saved and hope has been fulfilled, for these are brought to Christ. I cannot tell how many of you have laboured for those particular persons who are to be added to us. I know some of you have, but I venture to say this, that you that have prayed most shall rejoice most; you that have spoken most to souls, who have laboured most to bring them to Christ, you shall have the sweetest part in the present joy of harvest. As for you loiterers, that do nothing but look on—as for you who are ready at meal-time to come in and dip your bread into our vinegar, but have nothing to do in the matter, who have not toiled with us side by side—you will have little joy. You will perhaps stand by and be suspicious at the results. Like the elder brother, you will be angry and not come in while we have music and dancing over the brother who was lost and is now found, who was dead and is alive; but you that have believed most, you that have hoped most, you that have worked most, you shall keep the feast and rejoice before God with the joy of harvest. Glory be unto God! he has not failed us, his word has not returned unto him void; he has heard the cry of his children, he has given to us to sow in tears and to reap in joy. It is the joy of realisation.

Change the note a moment, and observe that it is the joy of congratulation. I think I may congratulate

you, my brethren and sisters. There is a time for rebuke, and there is a time for expressing our mutual comfort in one another. Let us congratulate one another that the Spirit of God is with us as a people, and with us in no mean measure. Oh, what would other churches give to have such an increase as we have had year by year! God has been pleased to add to us, year by year, pretty nearly after the rate of four hundred members in a year, till it has swollen our numbers beyond our most sanguine hopes. Oh, how greatly has he multiplied the people and increased our joy! Surely the Spirit of God is with us! Every month we have testimony that the word has been made useful. I do not think there has been a sermon preached here which God has not blessed. Ought we to restrain the expression of our gratitude through any fear of trespassing on humility, when we can say from positive facts that there have been those who have come to us and professed, either that they have found the Saviour, or were led to tremble under a sense of sin through the word every time it has been preached? Surely the Spirit of God is manifestly with us; shall we not recognise his presence? Must we not now adoringly bless him, that, though we are not worthy that he should come under our roof, he does deign to abide with us and make the place of his feet glorious.

Let us congratulate one another that our prayers, notwithstanding all the faults that mar them, and the infirmities that cleave to them, are being heard. They are penetrating heaven, they are entering the pearly gate, they are going up before the throne of the Most

High. Through Jesus' blood, which they use as their great prevailing weapon, they are moving the arm which moves the world; blessings are coming down upon our sons and daughters, and upon our kinsfolk and acquaintance, in answer to our wrestling, believing prayer. Let us congratulate one another. If we were depressed, if we were like a wilderness, we would condole with one another. Let us now felicitate one another, interchange our cheerful smiles and our thankful greetings; let us take the right hand of fellowship over again, and, looking back upon the past, vow for the future, in God's name, that, if he will but strengthen us, nothing shall daunt our courage, nothing restrain our zeal. What he has done shall make us aspire to more; what has been accomplished by us as a people shall be but a stepping-stone to more daring attempts, to more zealous adventures, to more arduous labours for the promotion of his kingdom and the extension of his sway. Let us, then, have the joy of congratulation. As the farmer congratulates the men, and as the men congratulate the master, as the one says, "Blessed be ye in the name of the Lord," and the others reply, "We wish you a blessing in God's name," so now let us give mutual blessings, let us congratulate each other for God's mercy.

And is it not particularly a joy of gratitude? I envy not the man who can see the church increased and yet not feel a sacred home-felt joy. I know some little narrow souls, so compressed within their own selfishness, that to feed their souls and cherish their feelings seems to them the sole aim and end of gospel ministry. Whether souls are lost or saved other than their own,

they reck not. It has been the lot of some of us to be cast among a narrow-minded class of people at times, who say, with a supine satisfaction, "There are very few that shall be saved;" and the fewer the number in their fellowship, the more confident they grow of their own election. The appearance of a candidate for baptism or church-membership is the signal for all of them to put on their spectacles, and look him through and through to see if he be not a hypocrite. I do not know that their churches are so particularly pure, but I do know that it is particularly difficult to get into them. I do not know that they are worth getting into, but I do know that they ought to be worth it, considering the time it takes before one can possibly be received into their enclosure. You must be summered and wintered, and tried this way and that, before you can be received; and when you are received, the members are sure to rub their hands together, and say, "Well, it's a serious thing to receive members;" and they are about as glad as I suppose a poor man would be who had nineteen children, when there is another coming to eat of the scanty loaf. They seem to think that the addition of so many new members would make the whole of the old members so much the poorer. For my part—and I think I can speak for all here—we feel greatly rejoiced, and the more there are brought into the Christian family the more joyful we shall be. We will bless our God—without ceasing will we bless his name, that he does add to us, for this is his work. Jesus sees of the fruit of his passion, the Spirit sees the result of his operation, the Divine Father sees his own children returning to his own board, and

herein we do rejoice—yea, and we will rejoice with the joy of gratitude.

I have been trying to think over the various causes for joy we may have concerning those who are just now added to us, but I do not think I can sum them up. The joy of sympathy, however, cannot be wanting. In many cases you may not know the persons admitted, and yet you may enter into the fellowship of their circumstances. A parent's joy may kindle some fellow-feeling. There are fathers here, and mothers, who feel the tears rising in their eyes because a dear boy or a dear girl has been before the church, and borne witness of faith in Jesus, and is now to be publicly received with the right hand of fellowship into communion with that church of which his parents have long been members. Estimate the prayers uttered or unexpressed, the sighs that have gone up to heaven, the many fears, the motherly pangs, the fatherly cares, and now share the joy of the parents, while they say to you, "Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Here, too, are wives who see their husbands saved, and there is much joy occasioned thereby. There will be a happy household now. Here are sisters and brothers that have watched over brothers and sisters with the most sedulous attention and importunate prayer, and at last they see them relent the obduracy they once indulged, and confess the Saviour whom once they despised. But, oh, pardon me when I do entreat you to sympathise and to share my joy, for it is a joy that overflows just now, and would fain call kinsfolk and friends to rejoice with me. What a mercy to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins! How

precious is that promise, that they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. As I sight that constellation my heart beats with emotion. Not indeed that I ask you to share my joy alone, but to share now the joy of earnest teachers in this church. Need I mention names? You know the persons without my breathing their names. The men, the women, that love the souls of sinners, and have been blessed in our midst in bringing them to Jesus, are entitled to your greetings. Rejoice with them; they have found their Master's sheep, and they are rejoicing with the joy of harvest; I pray you aid their joy and share their joy. Sunday-school teachers, God blesses you: out of your school there come additions. You that conduct our catechumen classes, God blesses you: we have additions from your midst. Young men that preach in the street, ye missionaries that toil in your little rooms, and serve God by speaking a word of exhortation, ye have all been honoured; this month there has been some fruit from every department of service; therefore let us join in sympathy with the labourers whom God has honoured in thanking God for their success in souls saved.

And may I not ask you to rejoice because there is One who loves souls better than I do, better than you do, who rejoices more than any of us? It is the Man that bought them with the wounds in his hands and his feet. He looks down upon those who have come up to him from the wilderness, and are looking to him alone for salvation. Their eyes that were red with weeping flash with hallowed joy. His eyes that were full of pity beam with satisfaction, and unfeigned

delight sits upon the Saviour's brow. I cannot see him with these dim mortal eyes, but I know that he is here by an inward consciousness. Each soul that has trusted him has been another jewel to his crown, another flush of pleasure in return for his pangs of grief. Come, let us rejoice with him. Jesu, companion of our sorrow, Captain of our Salvation, when thou art glad we are exceedingly refreshed. Nor is this all, for in yonder skies there are those that wait upon our Master, who once waited on him on earth, and are now glad to hymn his praise before his throne. Oh, could you hear their songs, they are just now louder and sweeter than is their wont. "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah!" ever rolleth up to the throne of God and the Lamb; but now it is deeper, and its volume is more mighty, and its note more sweet, as they sing over the in-gathering of souls into God's church. "I say unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." How much more when by scores, and even by hundreds, repenting sinners find the Saviour!

Think what might have been the lot of those who profess now to have been saved. Ye had need of a prophet to tell you. Some of them might have been —where they once were—upon the ale-house bench, with the drunkard; aye, and where some of *them* were who have been washed and cleansed—with the harlot in her midnight sin. There are young ones to be added to this church, who have never gone into open sin, but if they had not been called by grace, little do we know what might have been the career of vice before them. Temptation might have led to sin, sin might have

ripened into habit, habit might have gathered force, until they became ringleaders in mischief; but they are washed, but they are cleansed. O Satan, what a harvest hast thou lost! What soldiers have been taken from thy ranks! how much mischief might they have done, which now they shall scrupulously avoid, for grace has turned them in another road, and filled their mouths with another song.

Think, too, of what they now shall be through divine grace. I cannot depict to you each case. I know there are some here whom we look upon with hope that they shall be teachers of others. We have, especially, holy mothers bringing up their children in God's fear, and holy fathers seeking the conversion of their little ones. Their seed, as a generation which the Lord hath blessed, shall become in after years, some of them, pillars of the church, honoured and honourable; they shall serve their Master in this life, they shall bear testimony to his faithfulness in death; they shall sing his praise for ever.

Still, with all this joy of harvest, there is one mortifying reflection. I would not say much of it to damp your joy. It is this. Out of those added to the church there are always some who are not saved. Let us judge carefully and watch earnestly. Some come like Judas, with a lie in their right hand, and put on Christ by profession, who are not followers of Christ in spirit and in truth. Search yourselves, brethren and sisters, and if ye be not Christ's, do not dishonour his name by venturing to be called by it.

And there is another grievous thought. While so many are ingathered, many there be who are left out.

Oh, some of you have been with us in our best days, and I am afraid I shall have to ring that text again in your ears, as I have done aforetime: "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, but ye are not saved, ye are not saved." Your sister is saved, but you are not saved; your wife is saved, but you are not. Two of you sleep in one bed, one has been taken and the other left. Two of you grind at one mill in your daily work, one has been taken and the other left. You are not saved, you are not saved! and when the time comes for you to die, this will be a bitter word to ring in your ears with more doleful sound than death-knell ever knew—"Not saved! not saved!" Amidst the joy of harvest, let us not forget to pray for those who are still wandering in the paths of sin, or pandering to the vanities of the world.

Another harvest is coming, when Christ shall gather together his people. There will be first of all the in-gathering of the righteous. Do not make a mistake about the day of judgment, as though the righteous and the wicked were to be judged together, for remember that first of all there will come the day when the righteous shall be gathered. If you read the Book of Revelation, you will find that the harvest precedes the vintage. The righteous are gathered as the harvest of the earth, and afterwards the vintage of the world is gathered—that is, the wicked. The harvest is gathered into the garner, the vintage into the wine-press, and then the grapes are trodden under foot till the blood thereof floweth out, even up to the horses' bridles. Well, there is to come a harvest of the righteous, and what joy there will be when you witness the number,

the countless number that swells the ranks of the blessed. O ye angels, ye had need to be twice ten thousand times ten thousand, when, at the ingathering of sheaves that no man can number, ye welcome the multitudes of the redeemed! What shoutings when millions upon millions mount to the upper skies! It was great joy when all Israel passed through the Red Sea, but how much greater joy when ten thousand times ten thousand, even myriads upon myriads, shall enter into their eternal rest! There will be joy in the persons saved; each one will have a separate song, or make a distinct note in the one song. What joy over Magdalene and the dying thief! What joy over Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus! Each separate case shall stand out clear and bright, as though it were better than another, and yet each one shall claim that his is the choicest exhibition of divine love and faithfulness. What joy when altogether the jewels shall be put into the casket! Think of what they shall be gathered from! From poverty, from sickness, from beds of dust and silent clay they shall be gathered; from slander and rebuke, from persecution and from suffering, from the lion's jaws, and from the flames they shall be gathered, ten thousand times ten thousand of them, from sin and suffering, to sin and to suffer no more.

Where will they be gathered to? Gathered to their Saviour, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Remember that they all will be gathered, not one will be absent; and every one will be gathered in a perfect state, not one unripe for heaven, not one green ear, not one child unfit for his heritage, but all ready and

prepared through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Oh, that mine eyes could see the day! The pearly gates stand wide open, and first comes the Saviour up the eternal hills, leading the van fresh from the battle-fields of Armageddon, where, for the last time, he has fought and triumphed over all his foes. And here come the noble army of martyrs, waving the palm, and then the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the great assembly of the ministers and preachers of the Word, and the multitude and hosts of those who through great tribulation, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Hark, how hell gnashes her teeth! how the infernal lake is stirred to envious burning, while they see these brands plucked from the fire as they ascend to heaven! Listen to the symphonious harpings of the myriads of spirits, as from the battlements of heaven they look on with wonder, and gaze upon the new inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are coming to people it and make it glorious, more glorious than it was before! Hark, how they begin the song, "Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts;" and hark how the multitude outside the walls echo the strain, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him shall be glory for ever and ever;" and yet again, "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." May you and I be partakers of the joy of harvest, and not be yonder, with those among whom there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, because they would not trust the Lamb; because they would not come to him that they might have life, but chose their own delusion, and followed out their

own corruptions, till they met with the due desert of their deeds. God bless you, dear friends, every one of you, and make you partakers of the present joy and the everlasting felicity of the saints, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

God's Glory in the Building up of Zion.

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."
—Psalm cii. 16.

THE Lord himself must "build up Zion," or it never will be built. He first planned it; he is the architect of his own church; he digged the foundations; he has supplied the great corner-stone; he himself, by his own power, creates each living stone, polishes it, and fits it into its place. He cements the whole structure, and as he first sketched the plan, so will he complete it in every iota to the praise and the glory of his wisdom, his grace, and his love. It shall be said to Zion, when all her walls are builded, and all her palaces completed, and when all her happy inhabitants have their mouths filled with song as they walk in white—"The Lord hath built it, from the foundation even to the top-stone." I remember to have seen, close by the side of the Alps, a house which had upon its front words to this effect: "This house was built entirely by the skill, wealth, and industry of its inhabitants." It struck me as not being a very modest thing to put in front of one's house, for after all the structure was not very marvellous; but when we look at the glorious

architecture of the church of God, it would be no mean part of its lustre that it may fittingly bear such an inscription as this—"This house was built entirely by the wisdom, the munificence, and the power of the infinite Jehovah."

But while the text reminds us of this truth, which I hope we never can forget, it also brings to our minds three or four other truths; and the first point of our discourse shall be ZION BUILT UP.

I. I suppose we shall all consider that one essential to the building up of Zion would be *practical conversion.* It is of small avail for a man to say he is building up a church where the power of the Holy Ghost is not seen in calling sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. There may be periods in which conversions are few, but if, instead of their being exceptional, this should come to be the rule with one's ministry, there would be grave cause to suspect that God was not working with the minister, certainly not in the sense of building up. We find not unfrequently in Holy Scripture, that the fathers of households are called "builders," and that the term is used continually, "the building a house," in respect to the birth and training up of a family. Now, in the great Christian family our converts are the new-born children, and a family is not built up for God except with these sons and daughters, who are like stones polished after the similitude of a palace. We little know the blessing which young converts bring to us. They quicken the pulse of old Christians; they strengthen and confirm the faith of those who have long been walking in the truth, and they do, as it were, infuse new blood

into the fellowship of the saints. They come to us as God's message from on high. They are tokens for good, and whereas we might have thought, perhaps, that the triumphs of the cross were confined to the heroic age, when the Spirit of God was poured out in Pentecostal measure, yet as we see our sons converted, and the great miracle of regeneration still being performed, we take heart and are of good courage to go on in the work of the Lord. Conversions we must have, for there is no building up of Zion without them.

And then there must follow conversions, *a public confession of faith.* Though the invisible church of God is built up by conversions, the outward church is only built up as men and women associate together in the holy society which we call "the church." It is the duty of every Christian—nay, it is the instinct of his spiritual life—to avow the faith which he has received, and avowing it, he finds himself associated with others who have made the same profession, and he assists them in holy labour. When he is strong he ministers of his strength to the weak, and when he is himself weak, he borrows strength from those who just then may happen to be strong in the faith. Where were our institutions if church fellowship were broken up? Plainly, if it be right for one Christian to remain out of church fellowship, it is right for all; and then if there were no churches there would be no institutions, and where would the gospel itself be? I would not lay too much stress on the church of God, but I venture to ask you, is it not written that she is "the pillar and ground of the truth"? If, then, I withhold my confession of faith, and my personal communion with the visible

church, I to that extent weaken the pillar and ground of the faith. We need confessions of faith as well as conversions.

By a church being thus formed in order to its being built up, something more is wanted. *We cannot build without union.* A house is not a load of bricks, neither is the church a mere conglomeration of human beings. A house must have its doors, and its windows, its foundation, its rafters, and its ceiling. So, a church must be organised; it must have its distinct offices and officers; it must have its departments of labour, and proper men must be found, according to Christ's own appointment, to preside over those departments.

Our Saviour was raised up on high to receive gifts for men, and to give gifts to men, and those gifts are, first apostles, then pastors, and teachers, and evangelists, and so on; "for the building up of the saints, and for edifying." So we read, but you all know that in plain English it means, "for the building up of the saints, and the perfecting of the body of Christ." Some of the old Roman walls are compacted with such excellent cement, that it would be almost impossible to separate one stone from another; in fact, the whole mass has become consolidated like a solid rock, so embedded in cement that you cannot distinguish one stone from another. Happy the church thus built up, where each cares not only for his own prosperity, but for the prosperity of all—where, if there be any joy in one member, all the members rejoice, and if there be sorrow in any one part of the body, all the rest of the body is in sorrow too, "remembering those that are in bonds as bound with them, and those that are in adversity as

being yourselves also in the body." And yet, what are some churches but semi-religious clubs, mere conventions of people gathered together? They have not in them that holy soul which is the essence of unity; there is no life to keep them in entirety. Why, the body would soon become disjointed, and a mass of rottenness, if the soul were not in it; and if the Spirit of Christ be absent, the whole fabric of the outward church begins to fall to pieces; for where there is no life there can be no true union.

More than this, to build up a church there needs to be *edification and instruction in the faith.* It is, I think, a matter for deep regret that this is not an age in which Christian people desire to be edified. It is an age in which they like to have their ears tickled, and delight to have a multiplicity of anecdotes and of exciting metaphors; but they little care to be well instructed in the sound and solid doctrines of the grace of God. In the old Puritanic times sermons must have been tiresome to the thoughtless, but now-a-days I should think they are more tiresome to the thoughtful. The Christian of those days wanted to know a great deal of the things of God; and provided that the preacher could open up some mystery to him, or explain some point of Christian practice to make him holier and wiser, he was well satisfied, though the man might be no orator, and might lead him into no fields of novel speculation. Christians then did not want a new faith; but, having received the old faith, they wished to be well rooted and grounded in it, and therefore they sought daily for illumination as well as for quickening; they desired, not only to have the

emotions excited, but also to have the intellect richly stored with divine truth; and there must be much of this in every church, if it is to be built up. No neglect of an appeal to the passions, certainly; no forgetfulness as to what is popular and exciting; but with this we must have the solid bread-corn of the kingdom, without which God's children will faint in the weary way of this wilderness.

It does not strike me, however, that I have yet given a full picture of the building up of a church, for a church such as I have described would not yet answer the end for which Christ ordained it. Christ ordained his church to be his *great aggressive agency* in combating with sin, and with the world that lieth in the wicked one. It is to be a light, not to itself, as a candle in a dark lantern, but a light unto that which is without. Albeit we are not saved by works, yet the ultimate result of salvation must always be work. The cause of salvation lies in grace, but the effect of salvation appears in working. As sure as ever the grace of God fills a soul, that soul desires to see others brought in. That respectable church, that wealthy church, which is quite satisfied to have no debt upon its own building, content if its minister be as sparsely remunerated as possible—without enthusiasm, without zeal, always harping on the string of prudence, conservatism, and orthodoxy, having no care whatever to be aggressive—such a church needs to be built on other foundations, to get rid of its wood, hay, and stubble, and to be built on gold, and silver, and precious stones, or otherwise it will not honour Christ. It strikes me that it is necessary for the edification of every Chris-

tian man that he should have something to do. We learn to be soldiers by being drilled; nay, the veteran is taught to fight by fighting. I think most ministers know that one of the best methods of learning to preach is to preach, and the best way of learning Christianity is to be a Christian practically. Said one, "If thou wouldst do good, be good." And I have sometimes thought, if we would be good, we must do good, not to make us so, but as the best discipline to keep us in good health and good training. Do not let us hope that we ourselves can be devoted to God, except by Christian service; and let us not hope that the church can ever be so devoted, except by casting about in the world to do for Christ whatever cometh to its hands.

But I must go yet a step further. After a church has become all that I have been describing, the next thing it ought to do should be to *think of the formation of other churches.* The building up of an empire must often be by colonisation. Her Majesty's dominions, upon which we proudly say, "the sun never sets," have been greatly enlarged by the sons and daughters of Britain who have gone to other lands. The true process of increasing the church must be by her forming colonies. Who dares to deny that in the building of many of the places of worship in England and elsewhere, the devil has not had as much to do as Christ has had, I mean in our denomination, if not in any other? A great number of chapels have been the result of schism, bad spirit, bickering, jealousy, and I know not what—quarrelling and contending perhaps about some points of truth which, if important, could not be so important as the spirit of love and of unity. Many

and many a time a house has been dedicated to God, when the first thought that led to it, and the last act that finished it, were simply a thought and an act of pride, or envy, or pure sectarian bigotry, and nothing more. Now, I do not think, although he has no doubt overruled it for good, that this is legitimate; but for a number of Christian people associated together in a church, and finding that the church has grown strong enough to be able to afford to lose them, for these to swarm off and form another church, and give of their substance to build another house, seems to me to be a legitimate and proper method in which Zion may be built up in these our realms.

II. THE BUILDING UP OF ZION IS, ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, CONNECTED WITH JEHOVAH'S BEING GLORIFIED.

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." Ah! brethren and sisters, it would need a seraph to tell of all the glory which has come to God through the building up of his church. Heaven rang with acclamations when the angels first learned that God designed to have a church. When they perceived, by the glimmering light of the first promise, that there was to be a seed of the woman as well as a seed of the serpent, they began to hymn Jehovah's praise, and, when Christ was given, and so the foundation of the church was actually laid, the glory of creation was eclipsed, and even the splendour of Providence might almost have been forgotten in the more transcendent glory of grace. God had done marvellously before, but never did he seem so divine as when he gave his dear Son, and when, in the holy life and dying pangs

of the Son of his love, the foundation of the church was laid. So too God is glorified in every single part of the building of his church. There is not a stone quarried from the dark pit of nature, or polished by the tools of grace, or put into its position, without fresh honour to God and new glory to his name. He cannot *be* more glorious, but he appears more richly glorious in the building up of his church. And what will be the glory when the top-stone is brought out—when the last elect one shall be cemented to the visible whole! What shall be the undying melody, the unceasing song of ages, as to principalities and powers shall be made known, by the church, the unspeakable riches of the grace of God!

Sometimes, however, a suspicion has arisen in the minds of God's people that God was not glorified in his church; and the text almost seems to hint, not that God is not glorified, but, at any rate, that he is not so much glorified in the church at one time as another, for it says, "When the Lord shall build up Zion," as if he were not always building up Zion, at least not to the same extent. We know from painful experience, that there are lulls, seasons when a dead calm comes over the church, and then, to the minds of many, God's glory is not revealed. In consequence thereof the inhabitants of Zion hang their harps upon the willows and go a-mourning; and yet, had we more faith, and put sense more in the background, we might sing to our Well-Beloved a song touching his vineyard, even when the wild boar out of the wood is wasting her, and her hedges are being broken down. The wave recedes, but the tide advances; the day may seem to be dark, but

every hour is bringing on the noon. God advances not by little steps, but in the work of his grace we may say of him—

> "On cherub and on cherubim
> Full royally he rode;
> And on the wings of mighty wind
> Came flying all abroad."

We must not judge him by inches who is not even to be measured by leagues, nor by handfuls when the mountains are too small for his hands, and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Our belief is that the whole way through God is building up his church, and that he does appear in his glory.

Perhaps one or two thoughts may make this more clear to us. God often appears in glory to me as one of his builders, and I will tell you in what respect. When I have been sitting to see inquirers, I have sometimes found that God has blessed to the conversion of souls some of my worst sermons—those which I thought I could weep over, which seemed more than ordinarily weak, and lacking in all the elements likely to make them blessed, except that they were sincerely spoken. When I have seen that the work was done, though the workman, naturally weak, was on that occasion more than usually depressed with infirmity, I have only been able to lift up my hands and say, "Now, Lord, thou appearest in thy glory, since thou dost build up Zion and convert sinners by the most unlikely means, and the truth, apparently when most feebly spoken, works the mightiest results; this is to make thy name glorious indeed!"

Another thing has sometimes made one see God in

his glory. Persons have been brought up and educated under sermons that are as hostile to spiritual life as the plague is to natural life. They have from their youth up seen religion in all its gaudy show of symbolism, and yet one hearing of the simple gospel has been sufficient for their conversion. Perhaps the mere reading of a single text has untwisted the knots of forty years, and the despotism of the priesthood over the mind has fallen at the touch of a single passage of God's Word. The case of Luther is one instance of this, and in all such cases God appears in his glory. If you will look at each conversion, and especially at the sudden conversion of those who for long years have been inured to the very reverse of the gospel of Christ, you will see God appearing in his glory.

Think, too, of the agencies which are abroad hostile to the church of God. The Jews were glad to see the walls of Jerusalem rise, because they remembered Geshem, and Tobiah, and Sanballat, and all the rest that laughed and jeered at them. Up went the walls though these laughed, and the foxes did not break down the wall, though Sanballat so ventured to prophesy. In this age the church is not without her adversaries too, and they are of a very dangerous sort. They are not always outspoken adversaries. Some of them teach us how to doubt—not because they doubt themselves, they say, but because it is so healthy a thing for our minds to be rid of the bondage of old-fashioned dogmas. They are not themselves unsound, but still if a brother should happen to be so they will defend him, thereby providing a defence for themselves when they should more fully need it.

If they would only state what they do believe, or what they do not believe, it were easy to deal with these foes; but inasmuch as the whole thing is too shadowy, and too vague, we feel as if we were under the plague of flies which were in Egypt when we have to deal with these minute adversaries. But let us reflect that with all this God is still building up his church. Looking back at the last ten or twenty years, am I too sanguine if I say that the age is, after all, better than it was? I do not mean that the world is better, but I do mean that, as a whole, there is more evangelical preaching and more earnest pleading with God now than there were ten years ago. I am not given to complimenting, but I do feel that we have made an advance, and that the Christian church is more awake than it was. I grant you that the foes are more vociferous. So let them be. I suppose the nearer the moon gets to its full the more the dogs bark, and the nearer the harvest is to getting ripe, the more numerous is the horde of birds who come to feed upon the grain. It must be expected; but God appears in his glory the more that his enemies surround his church.

Putting all these things together—poor instruments, poor materials, and numerous foes—let us say that when God builds up Zion under such circumstances as these, he does appear in his glory.

What a splendid thing was that—may we see it repeated in our own day!—when the twelve fishermen first attacked Roman idolatry. The prestige of ages made the idolatry of Rome venerable; it had an imperial Cæsar and all his legions at its back, and every favourable auspice to defend it. Those twelve men,

with no patronage but the patronage of the King of kings, with no learning except that which they had learned at the feet of Jesus, with weapons as simple as David's sling and stone, went forth to the fight; and you know how the grisly head of the monstrous idolatry was by-and-by in the hands of the Christian champion as he returned rejoicing from the fray. So shall it be yet again, and then, amidst the acclamation of myriad witnesses, shall God appear in his glory.

III. With great brevity let us now observe THE HOPE EXCITED.

If God be glorified by the building up of Zion, then most certainly Zion will be built. If he is glorified by the conversion, and by the banding together of converted men and women, then it seems but natural to hope, yea, with certainty we may conclude that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it.

Let me suppose that you had been created as a solitary creature, and that it had been made known to you, by the mouth of God himself, that it would be to God's glory to create unnumbered worlds, would you be unreasonable in looking for the first day in which the heavens and the earth should be created? You would soon come to an absolute certainty, putting faith in the prophecy, that since God would be glorified in creating, he would create; and supposing when you saw the world created you knew, from God's own mouth, that it would be to his glory for him to take the reins of human affairs, and manage everything according to the counsel of his own will, you would feel persuaded that he would do it. Well, you are clearly informed here that it is for God's glory to build up his church; then draw the

inference, draw it boldly, nay, draw it confidently, and say, "If it be for God's glory, then it must and shall be done."

I like the spirit in which Luther used to say, that when he could get God into his quarrels he felt safe. When it was Luther alone, he did not know which way it would go; but when he felt that his God would be compromised and dishonoured if such a thing were not done, and would be glorified if it were done, then he felt safe enough. So, dear friends, in the great crusade of truth is not God with us beyond a doubt? The ship of the church carries Christ and all his fortunes, and how can she be wrecked? The honour of the church is intertwisted with the honour and glory of Christ; if she shall pass away, if she be deserted, then where is her Captain, her Head, her Husband? But as his honour must be safe, so should hers be. Zion shall be lifted up, that God may appear in his glory.

IV. Our whole subject SUGGESTS AN INQUIRY.

Have I any part or lot in this work which is to bring glory to God? I may have to do with it in two ways, as a builded one, or as a builder. I can have nothing to do with it in the latter capacity, unless I have had to do with it in the former. God will be glorified in the building up of Zion: shall I minister to his glory by being part of the Zion that is to be built up? I remember to have heard one who half-solaced himself in the prospect of his eternal ruin. He was a hardened sinner, but he was trying to draw some sort of comfort from the thought that if he were lost for ever he should glorify Christ. I was startled, horror seized me when he put it in that light. A truth in some sense, I could

not bear to see it so handled by him as to clothe it in the vestments of a lie. I was obliged to quote the other text, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." You do not find God ever speaking of deriving glory from the death of him that dieth; you do not find that it administers anything of gratification to the Eternal Mind that a soul should perish. There is a glory to his justice, doubtless—an awful splendour wrapped about the executioner's axe; but it is a glory of which God says but little, and of which my text says nothing at all. The true glory of God is like the glory of the king who will not glory in the numbers executed upon the hill of death, but who glories in his subjects who are happy and blessed. God glories, not in the soul whom there is a dire necessity to cast away, but in the soul whom almighty grace has chosen, redeemed, and saved.

I should think, friend, if thy reason be in a right state, that thou wilt have some wish to glorify the God that made thee. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. Dost thou not know? Wilt not thou consider? If thou buildest a house, thou expectest some comfort from it; if thou sowest a field, thou expectest to gather some grain therefrom; and shall God who has made thee, put breath into thy nostrils, and who feeds thee every day—shall he then have no honour out of thee, no glory at thy hands? Shalt thou be a waif and a stray drifting along on the tides of time valueless, with none to care for thee because thou hast lost thy compass and livest not for the true object of human life? May I ask you to put this question to yourselves. The inquiry whether

you have anything to do or not with glorifying God in the building up of his church may be very serviceable to you. If you find that you have no interest at all in the matter, may not that thought be blessed of God to make you start? Oh, that men would start! They sleep when everlasting wrath impends; oh, that they would feel the shock and avert the stroke!

A startling preacher is wanted by a slumbering age. Be startling preachers to yourselves just now. Oh, men and women, there are some of you—it were hopeless to expect it were not so—in whom God will have no glory from your being built into his church; for you are like the stones of the valley, which are not built up, but lie, to be broken at last by the hammer, when the breaker shall come forth to the work of destruction. Wouldst thou glorify God, sinner? Hast thou never heard the question asked by the Jews, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" And this was the answer—"This is the work of God, the chief work of all, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." If thou wouldst glorify God, humble thyself, bow the knee, and kiss the Son, and receive salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ; and then, being built upon this foundation, thou shalt glorify God.

The inquiry shapes itself afresh. Hast thou anything to do with glorifying God in respect of *being thyself a builder up of Zion?* It is a shame that these lips should have to say it, but we must speak out—that there are some who profess to be built, but who are not building; who say that they are servants, but are not serving; who profess to be in the vineyard, but are not working; who say they are soldiers, but are not fighting!

My brethren, I count it to be one of the most precious parts of my spiritual heritage that I am permitted to serve Christ; and let me say that if my Lord Jesus gave me nothing else on earth but the privilege of serving him, I would bless him for it to all eternity. It is no mean honour to be a servant of the King of kings; and there is such pleasure in honouring Christ, and in winning souls, that I can scarcely believe that any of you have ever tasted it, or else you would be hungering after more of it. Did you ever win a soul to Christ? Did you ever get a grip of the hand of spiritual gratitude? Did you ever see the tear starting from the eye when the convert said, "Bless you! I shall remember you in heaven, for you have brought me to Christ"? Ah, my dear friend, you will not be satisfied merely with this. This is a kind of food that makes men hungry. Oh that you had a rich banquet of it, and yet wanted more still. The church shall and must be built. If you and I sit still, it will be built. This is a glorious truth, though it is often perverted to a mischievous end—the church will be built, even without us. But oh, we shall miss the satisfaction of helping in its building. Yes, it will grow; every stone will be put in its place, and the pinnacle will soar to its predestinated elevation, but every stone from foundation to pinnacle, will seem to say to you, "Thou hadst nothing to do with this! Thou hadst no hand in this!" When Cyrus took one of his guests round his garden, the guest admired it greatly, and said he had much pleasure in it. "Ah," said Cyrus, "but you have not so much pleasure in this garden as I have, for I planted every tree in it myself." One reason why

Christ has so much pleasure in his church is because he did so much for it; and one reason why some saints will have a greater fulness of heaven than others to rejoice in will be because they did more for heaven than others. By God's grace they were enabled to bring more souls there; and as they look upon the church they may, without self-reliance or self-conceit, ascribing it all to grace, remember what they were enabled to do, as instruments in the hands of the Lord, towards its building up. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

Lukewarmness.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."—Rev. iii. 15, 16.

IF this had been an utterance of mine, it would have been accounted vulgar. As a sentence of Scripture, I suppose it may be permitted to escape the elegant censure of modern critics. The vernacular tongue and the homely figure may be decried as vulgarities; but it is by those whose tastes have been ill-schooled. A vicious refinement has come into vogue. If men call things by their names, and use old Saxon words, they are perpetually brought under the lash for having indulged in vulgarities. A return to the vulgar tongue in the pulpit would be a return to power. I would infinitely rather see back the homely language of Hugh Latimer, with all its angularity—and I must confess with some of its grossness—than have the namby-pamby style of modern times,—suggesting ideas as if they were only meant to be whispered in drawing-rooms, instead of stating facts which concern men in every-day life. The fact is, the

Bible is a book which deals with things as they are—a book which, just like all God's works, is grand and glorious, because it is natural and simple. God has not polished the rocks, he has not shaped the mountains in uniform order, nor has he yet been pleased to make all parts of the earth just as fair and lovely as if they had been a landscape; but he has roughly hewn them, and left them rugged as they were, and there they stand, nature's monuments in ridgy stone. And so is it with this book of God. There are found sayings in it at which the too polite shrug their shoulders—not so many in the original, certainly, as in our translation—but still enough to shock a prudish taste. The Bible is none the less chaste because it scorns to call foul things by fair names. I love the Word of God, because it is a manlike book while it is a Godlike book. In all the glory of his infinite wisdom he hath written to us in the simplicity and the rugged grandeur of language which follows no fashion, belongs to all time, and appeals to common understanding.

The Lord here uses a plain, homely metaphor. As tepid water makes a man's stomach heave, so lukewarm profession is nauseous to the Almighty. The coldness of apathy or the warmth of enthusiasm were either one or the other to be borne with; but the man who is lukewarm in religion moves him to the deepest loathing. He vomits him forth from his mouth. His name shall be dismissed from the lips of the Lord with an abhorrence the most sickening that fancy can paint. It is an utterance so strong that no sentence of the most impassioned and vehement orator would rival it. There is such a depth of solemn disgust in this warning against

lukewarmness that I know of no figure in the compass of imagination, and of no language in the entire vocabulary of words, which could have conveyed the meaning of Jesus Christ, "the faithful and true witness," so fully, or with so much terrible force.

My business, however, with the text is, first, to show some reasons why lukewarmness in religion is so distasteful to Christ, and then to use some dissuasives to urge you no more to be lukewarm, but to be fervent in your Master's cause.

I. First, then, let us attempt an exposure of some of the disgustful things which are found in lukewarm religion.

A lukewarm religion is a direct insult to the Lord Jesus Christ. If I boldly say I do not believe what he teaches, I have given him the lie. But if I say to him, "I believe what thou teachest, but I do not think it of sufficient importance for me to disturb myself about it," I do in fact more wilfully resist his word; I as much as say to him, "If it be true, yet is it a thing which I so despise and think so contemptible that I will not give my heart to it." Did Jesus Christ think salvation of such importance that he must needs come from heaven to earth to work it out? Did he think the gospel which he preached so worthy to be known that he must spend his life in scattering it? Did he think the redemption which he came to accomplish so invaluable that he must needs shed his own precious blood for it? Then surely *he* was in earnest. Now, when I profess to believe the things which he teaches, and yet am indifferent, do I not insult Christ by an insinuation that there was no need for his being in earnest—that in

fact he laid these things too much to heart? His intense zeal was not on his own account, but for another, and certainly, by all reason, the interested party, for whom his solemn engagements were undertaken, should be far more earnest. And yet, instead of that, here is Christ in earnest, and we—too many of us—lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. I say it doth not merely seem to give God the lie; it doth not merely censure Christ: but it doth, as it were, tell him that the things which he thought were so valuable were of no worth in our esteem, and so it doth insult him to his face.

Oh! my brethren and sisters, have you ever really thought what an insult it is when we come before God with lukewarm prayers? Here is a mercy-seat. The road to it must be cleared with blood, and yet we come to it with a heart that is cold, or leave our hearts behind. We kneel in the attitude of prayer; but we do not pray. We prattle out words, we express things which are not desires. We feign wants that we do not feel. Do we not thus degrade the mercy-seat? We make it, as it were, a common lounging-place, rather than an awful wrestling-place, once besprinkled with blood, and often to be besprinkled with the sweat of our own earnestness. When we come to the house of God, to which Jesus Christ hath invited us, as the banquet-house of rich provisions, do we not come up here, too often, as we would go to our shops—nay, not with so much earnestness as we take with us to the Exchange or to the counting-house? And what do we seem to say but that God's house is a common place, and that the food thereof is but ordinary food, and the solemn engagements of God's

sanctuary but everyday things, not worthy of the zeal and energy of a sensible man, but only fit to be passed through with mere lukewarmness of spirit? I think if I were to pause longer here I should show you I went not too far when I said lukewarmness is an insult to God. It insults him in all that is dear to him by casting a disparagement upon everything which he would have us believe to be precious.

Bethink you, again, does the Lord Jesus deserve such treatment at our hands? and may he not well say of such hearts as ours, he would that we were "either cold or hot"? O Jesus! thy heart was full of love to those in whom there was nothing lovely, thou didst leave the glories of thy Father's house, though there was no necessity that thou shouldst do so, except the Divine necessity, which was found in thine own heart; thou didst love thy Church so much that thou wouldst come down, and be bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh! With her thou wouldst endure poverty—with her contempt and shame and spitting. Thou didst fight her enemies; thou didst rescue her out of the hand of him that was stronger than she; thou didst count down the cost in drops of thy blood to buy her, to pay her debts, to redeem her from her thraldom. Thy pangs were grievous, thy sufferings were bitter, thine anguish was extreme. I look into thy dear face; I look on thy thorn-crowned head, on those emaciated cheeks, on those eyes red with weeping, and I say, O Jesus, thou art worthy of the best place in the human heart! Thou oughtest to be loved as never one was loved before. If there be flames, oh, let them be fanned to a vehement heat, and let those flames burn

up like coals of juniper! Let the flame be love to Christ. Oh, if it be possible for us to have a warm emotion, we ought to feel it here!

And is it not a sad thing that, after all his love to us, our return should be but a lukewarm love? Indeed, which would you rather have, a lukewarm love or an acknowledged aversion? Perhaps you have but little choice with regard to most men; but were it one dear to you—the partner of your life, for instance—why, methinks, lukewarm love would be no love at all. What but misery could there be in a family where there was a lukewarm affection? Is a father contented with half-hearted affection from his children? In those relationships we devote all the heart: but with Christ, who has far more claim on us than husband, or father, or mother, or brother, how is it that we dare to offer him a distant bow, a cool recognition, a chill, inconstant wavering heart? Let it be so no more. Oh, my brethren, I conjure you by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, by his wounds, by every drop of his blood, by his deep-fetched groans, by all the pangs that went through every nerve of his body, and by the deeper anguish of his inmost soul—I beseech you, either love or hate him; either drive him from the door, and let him know that you are not his friend, or else give him a whole heart that is full of affection, and bursting with divine love to Jesus.

But, though these two things might be enough to justify the strong expressions of the text—lukewarmness being both an insult to God and ingratitude to Christ—let me remind you, further, that the luke-

warm Christian compromises God before the eyes of the world in all he does and says. If a man be an infidel, openly profane, known to have no connection with Christ and his cause, let him do as he will, he brings no scandal on the Saviour's name. He hath no God before his eyes, he is in open alienship and enmity: therefore, his sins, though they be wicked and rebellious, full of sedition and defiance, yet do not before men compromise the dignity of the Most High. But when the lukewarm Christian goeth forth, men say, "This man professes to be a child of God; he professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ; he stands before us and challenges observation as being a new creature in Christ Jesus. He tells us that he is the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, that he has been 'begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'" Now, whatever that man does, the world conceives his acts to be the acts of a new creature in Christ Jesus—to be, in fact, acts caused by God's Spirit in him. The world doth not make distinctions, as we do, between the old Adam and the new. Their reason does not endorse our theories, true though they be, about the old and the new nature; it looks at it as a whole, and if it seeth anything wrong in our principle and practice, it layeth it down at once, and puts the inconsistency to the account of our religion. Now, mark ye this, ye lukewarm ones, what does the world see in you? They see a man who professes to be going to heaven, but he is travelling there at a snail's pace. He professes to believe there is a hell, and yet he has tearless eyes and never seeks to snatch souls from going into the fire. It sees before it one who has to deal with

eternal realities, and yet he is but half awake; one who professes to have passed through a transformation so mysterious and wonderful, that there must be, if it be true, a vast change in the outward life as the result of it; and yet they see him as much like themselves as may be—he may be morally consistent in conduct, but they see no energy in his religious character. Do they hear a stirring sermon concerning the wrath of God, "Oh," they say, "it is very well for the minister to appeal to our passions, but it is no great matter; the people who hear him are not in earnest, the *saints* who profess to believe this trifle with it, and no doubt are as incredulous as ourselves." Let the minister be as earnest as ever he will about the things of God, the lukewarm Christian neutralises any effect the minister can produce, because the world will judge the church not by the standard of the pulpit so much as by the level of the pew. And thus they say, "There is no need for us to make so much stir about it; these peculiar people, these saints, take it remarkably easy; they think it will all be well; no doubt we do as much as they do, for they do very little. They seem to think that after all it would be fanaticism to look upon these things as facts; they don't act as if they were realities; and so," saith the world, "doubtless they are not realities, and as one religion is as good as the other, there is no great reason for us to have any religion at all." The careless worldling is lulled to sleep by the lukewarm Christian, who in this respect acts the siren to the sinner, plays music in his ears, and even helps to entice him to the rocks where he shall be destroyed. It is a solemn matter in this respect. Here is damage done. Here God's name,

God's promise, and God's honour are compromised. Either lay down your profession or be honest to it. If ye do profess to be God's people, serve him; if Baal be your confidence, serve Baal. If the flesh be worth pleasing, serve the flesh; but if God be Lord paramount, cleave to him. Oh, I beseech you and entreat you, as you love your own souls, don't play fast and loose with godliness. Either let it alone, or else let it saturate you through and through. Either possess it or cease to profess it. The great curse of the church—that which bringeth more dishonour on God than all the ribald jests of scoffing atheists—the great curse has been the lukewarmness of its members, the being neither cold nor hot. Well may the Lord speak as he doth in this text, "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

But yet, again, please to notice that the Lord hateth lukewarmness, because wherever it is found it is out of place. There is no spot near to the throne of God where lukewarmness could stand in a seemly position. Take the pulpit. Ah, my brethren, of all spots in the world, if lukewarmness cometh here, then is the man undone indeed. He should be in earnest that undertakes the charge of souls, with that solemn text ringing in his ears, "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." They who have to deal with hard-hearted sinners—they who have to preach unpalatable truths—surely *they* should not make men's hearts harder, and the truth yet more unpalatable by uttering it in a half-hearted manner. It shall go hard with the man who has exercised the ministry with indifference. "If," saith one of old, "there be a man who finds the ministry

an easy place, he shall find it a hard matter at last to give in his account before God." If, my brethen, there should be some professed ministers of Christ who never know what it is to travail in birth for souls; if there be men who take it up as a mere profession and exercise it as they would any other literary matter; if they merely preach just because they consider it to be an excellent thing to do so, and pass through the duty as a matter of routine, it were better for them that they had never been born. It had been better for them to have broken stones on the road-side all their lives than to have been preaching the gospel, but leaving their hearts out of their sermons; yea, I know not but it were better to have been a devil in hell than to have been a minister in the pulpit who has not put his heart into his work. One thing of which Satan cannot be accused is, that he ever preached the gospel hypocritically; he never stooped to speak of flaming things with a cold tongue; he never addressed an audience upon solemn subjects when his heart was not in the matter. Baxter's "Reformed Pastor" often stirs my soul as I read over the glowing periods there, those fiery thunder-bolts which he dashes upon the heads of idle shepherds and lazy pastors. I have read nearly the whole book through to those who are studying for the ministry in connection with this church, and often have I seen the tear start from their eye; and every time I have read a chapter, I have felt that the next Sabbath I could preach—I must preach with greater earnestness, when I read the solemn words of that mightiest of ministers, Richard Baxter. Ah! we need to have more of that earnestness in the pulpit. What, my

brethren, though ye should study less, only be more earnest. Rather let them study as much as ever they can; but oh! if they could but kindle fire upon the dry fuel of their studies, how much more might be accomplished for the kingdom of Christ than is done now! Here you see, then, lukewarmness is out of place. So is it, my brethren, in the Sabbath-school, with the tract-distributor, and even with the humble attendant or private Christian. Everywhere lukewarmness is to be scorned, for it is a gross and glaring inconsistency. I would not have you distribute a tract with a lukewarm heart. I would not have you dare to visit the sick unless your heart is filled with love to Christ. Either do the thing well, or do not do it at all. Either put heart into the work, or let some one else do it. We have had too many men of straw to fill up our ranks; we have had automatons to go out to our battles, and we have counted our hosts, and said, "A brave host they will be"—because we have filled up our ranks with men that could be gathered out of any hedge, and then we have thought our regiments complete. If the ranks were sifted — if the army were divided, with fewer workers we should accomplish more. But, alas! those few workers are held back and impeded in their onward march by the mixed multitude of those who pretend to join with the army of the living God! Perhaps here in this church of all places you will find yourselves out of place, for I do not think a lukewarm Christian could be long happy amongst us. There are so many brethren here with a red-hot spirit that they would soon get burned; they would say, "This is not my spot; I cannot get much here." You would be asked to do

fifty things—you would be teased till you did them; for the good people here would not let you sit still unless you did all that you could, and they would want you to do more than you could by three or four times, nor would they be satisfied with you unless you were at least trying to do more than you were well able. I am sure in all places I have ever known, where God has sent warm-hearted men to preach in the church, you will find yourself extremely uncomfortable, if you want to be lukewarm. I certainly could tell you of a few chapels where you could take a seat, and where you would be greatly needed for the support of the ministry; the minister would never wake you; I dare say he would let you sleep, and if you paid an extra half-crown a quarter, he would never disturb you; if you did not join the church, nobody would ever think of asking you whether you were a member or not. In our fashionable churches, of course, people don't speak to one another—that would be quite beneath their assumed dignity; no man would dare to turn to his neighbour in the pew, and say, "Are you a child of God?" Well, if you would like to be lukewarm, you can go to those places; stay not here, for we will tease you out of your life; stay not, lest we should worry you with importunities. I question whether any person would come here for a few Sundays without some brother walking up to him, and asking him whether he was a follower of Christ or not. And it would be repeated until he would think the impertinence wore him out, and so it would, doubtless, unless he came to some decision about his soul.

II. But now I shall turn to my second point, in which

I am to attempt some dissuasives against lukewarmness. Having exposed its evils, let me endeavour to dissuade you from it. As Christians, you have to do with solemn realities; you have to do with eternity, with death, with heaven, with hell, with Christ, with Satan, with souls, and can you deal with these things with a cold spirit? Suppose you can, there certainly never was a greater marvel in the world, if you should be able to deal with them successfully. These things demand the whole man. If but to *praise* God require that we call up all our soul and bless him with all our powers, how much more to *serve* God, and to serve him not in hewing of wood or drawing of water, but in winning of souls, in dealing with gospel truth, in propagating his cause, and in spreading his kingdom. Here, my brethren, there are stern and solemn things to deal with, and they must not be touched by any but those who come warm-heartedly to deal with them. Remember, too, that these were very solemn things with you once. Perhaps you have been converted ten or twenty years, and can it be that these things fall lightly now upon your ear, and excite little emotion? There was a time when it needed little to make you earnest; you were then laden with guilt and full of fears; your groans were deep; you could not rest at nights; you were labouring under a burden so heavy that it seemed to crush your soul all but into the lowest hell. Then you prayed in earnest; then you sought God in earnest. Oh, how you used to long even to stand in the aisle! it did not matter though the distance were great, or the pressure to enter into the house of God was inconvenient; though you were ready to faint sometimes

during the sermon, you bore up through an unsatiable desire to hear the Word which might be the means of your salvation. Do you not remember that you thought at that time every man a fool, and especially yourself a fool, for having left so long these great realities untouched, unthought of, unrealised, while the trifles of a day were engrossing all your thoughts? Oh, then, I conjure you by those days gone by, think as earnestly of these things now as you did then! Let the past experience be the standard of your present zeal. You ought to have advanced, but if you have not, be content to go back again and begin where you were at that time; be humble enough to ask God to revive the sincerity of your penitence, the reality of your grace, the eagerness of your desires, the flaming passion of your heart. And remember, again, there have been times when these things did seem to be worthy of a warm heart. You remember when your Sunday-school child died, and then you thought, "Oh, that I had taught that child more earnestly, and prayed over it with all my heart!" Do you remember when you buried your own child, how you seemed to cry over it, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" and the thought wounded you to the quick, that you had not taught that child as you would—that you had not wrestled with God in prayer for that child's soul as you could well desire? And have not I had to think of this when I have buried some of your kinsfolk or acquaintance? As I have looked down into the grave of some unconverted hearer, the tears have fallen from my eye; and have I not awoke at night with some solemn and awful dream, embodying that black thought before my eyes—

"Have I been faithful to that soul? Have I dealt with that spirit as I would deal with it if I were called once more to preach the gospel to it?" Sometimes we can say, "We hope we have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, and if men perish their blood lieth not at our door;" but yet there are seasons of awful questioning, lest one out of a numerous flock should have been so neglected as that his perdition should be charged to the shepherd's neglect. Oh, do you not remember when the cholera was abroad how solemn you thought the things of God to be? And when the fever came into your house, and one died after another, you thought there was nothing worth living for but to be prepared to die, and that your whole business should now be to seek to warn others, lest they perish, and come into the place of torment. And the day is coming when you will think these things worthy of your whole heart. When you and I shall lie stretched upon our dying beds, I think we shall have to regret, above all other things, our coldness of heart. Among the many sins which we must then confess, and which I trust we shall then know were pardoned, and laid upon the scapegoat's head of old, perhaps that will lie the heaviest, like a lump of ice upon our hearts—"I did not live as I would; I was not in earnest in my Lord's cause as I should have been." Then shall our cold sermons march like sheeted ghosts before our eyes in dread array. Then shall our neglected days start up, and each day shall seem to wave its hair as though it were a fury, and look into our hearts, and make our blood curdle in our veins. Then shall our Sunday-school come

before us. Then shall those who taught us to teach others come and reprove us for having despised their trainings, for not having improved those holy teachings which we had when we were set apart for God's cause, or when we were first trained to serve in his army. We may count these things of little importance now, but when we lie on the borders of eternity we shall think them worth living for, and account them worth dying a thousand deaths for. I do think that some of those truths we have kept back, some of those ordinances we have despised, some of those precepts we have neglected, shall then seem to grow as sometimes in a dream you have seen a mountain rise from a grain, and swell, and swell, and swell, till its stupendous weight appeared to crush your brain—an awful mass, too heavy for your soul. And so it will be then if you have lived lukewarmly; the things of God will then, even though you be a child of God, darken your dying hour, and crush down your spirit with a fearful weight of sad reflection.

Ay, and there will be a time when the things of God will seem yet more real even than on the dying bed. I refer to the day when we shall stand at the bar of God. Am I prepared to stand there with a ministry half discharged? What shall I do if I have to give account before God for sermons preached without my heart? How shall I stand before my Maker, if I have ever kept back anything which I thought might be useful to you, if I have shunned to rebuke any of you, if I have not warned you faithfully, and loved you tenderly as my own soul, and sought to woo you to the Saviour? Where must I stand? Can

I give in my account as a steward of the Lord, if I have only served him half-heartedly? O God! grant, I beseech thee, that, notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, thy servant may ever be free from that grand sin, that great transgression, of being lukewarm in thy cause! And what think you, sirs, shall you do, as professors of Christ, if you have been lukewarm professors, if you have had a name to live and were dead, or if you were but half alive with every energy paralysed? Ah, sirs! ah, sirs! I would not stand in your places who are living as some of you do;—just observing the decencies of godliness without the vital life thereof, giving Christ a little of your substance for mere show, giving Christ a little of your time to pacify your conscience, taking his name upon you that you may hide your defects; but still a real stranger to his work, not giving yourself up to him—unconsecrated, undevoted—living to the flesh still, while pretending to be quickened by the Spirit—with your heart in your business, but no heart in your religion—pursuing the world rapidly, but following afar off your Master—putting both your hands to this world's plough, and only one hand to Christ's plough, and looking back while you do that. Oh, sirs, I tell you, when the earth begins to reel, when the heavens begin to shake, when the stars lose their places, and begin to dash abroad bewildered—you will be bewildered too. Your heart too shall shake, and your grand hopes totter to destruction, if you have only served Jesus with a lukewarm heart. God give us grace to make our religion *all*, to give our whole heart to it, to live in it, to live it out, and then to be prepared to die for it, if God so

please, that we may live to enjoy the results of it in glory everlasting!

I am fearful, full often, that in addressing you, the same congregation, Sabbath after Sabbath, and week after week, by the space of all these accumulating years, my voice should grow old and stale to you. This I can truly say, I had rather cease to preach than preach to people to whom my voice has become so familiar that it is but the ringing of an old bell to which they give no heed. No, there must be feeling in the congregation, with earnestness in the preacher; elsewise let me resign my commission. Oh, I pray God, if I be spared to labour with you, year after year, and you to sit in the pew to listen to the Word, that it may be with earnestness in you, and earnestness in me; that we may never come down to the dead level of some of the churches I alluded to just now—as you may think, in a spirit of censure, but God knows in a spirit of loving faithfulness; old churches that have come to be as pools without outlets, covered over with the sickly duckweed of respectability. Stagnation in a church is the devil's delight. I do not think he cares how many Baptist chapels you build, or how many churches you open, if you will but keep them stagnant; he cares not for your armies if the soldiers will but sleep; he cares not for your guns if they be none of them loaded. "Oh, let them build, let them build," says he, "for such buildings are not the batteries that shake the gates of hell." New zeal, new fire, new energy! This is what we want. Our old Baptist cause has got very slack. We are, the great mass of us Baptists, ignoring our convictions. We say so little

about them that people forget that there is an institution of Christ to defend which has been wilfully and wofully perverted from its original intent as well as its primitive form. If we have held our tongues about baptism, we have sin lying at our door. We shall have to give account to God, not only for our obedience but also for our testimony; and I would that in this matter we began to wake up. As baptism is an ordinance of Christ we ought to speak out about it. Do we know our cause to be just? then why should we fear to defend it? Let truth prevail in every article of our doctrine. Let wrong be assailed in every tittle of our conduct. Suffer no spurious charity to betray you into graceless laxness. To arms, to arms, if so it must be. We would not shrink or skulk when the occasion demands it. Controversy has its advantages; for thereby falsehood is unmasked, and therein truth is made manifest. Amidst the tumult of those who cling to traditions, we make our appeal to heaven. By terrible things in righteousness, answer thou, O God! Bring on the battle once again, the clash of arms once more; and let thy church win the victory. Give the victory to the right and to the true; and let error be trampled under foot; and with those errors, the errors *we* hold, let them be first trampled on and slain. So be it, O Lord, and unto thy name shall be the glory!

Restraining Prayer.

"Thou restrainest prayer before God."—Job xv. 4.

A CHARGE brought by Eliphaz the Temanite against Job, "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God!" I shall not use this sentence as an accusation against those who never pray, though there may be some in this house of prayer whose heads are unaccustomed to bow down, whose knees are unaccustomed to kneel before the Lord their Maker. You have been fed by God's bounty, you owe all the breath in your nostrils to him, and yet you have never done homage to his name. The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master's crib, but these know not, neither do they consider the Most High. The cattle on a thousand hills low forth their gratitude, and every sheep praiseth God in its bleatings; but these beings, worse than natural brute beasts, still continue to receive from the lavish hand of divine benevolence, but they return no thanks whatsoever to their Benefactor. Let such remember, that the ground which has long been rained upon, and ploughed and sown, which yet bringeth forth no fruit, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Prayerless

souls are Christless souls, Christless souls are graceless souls, and graceless souls shall soon be damned souls. See your peril, ye that neglect altogether the blessed privilege of prayer. You are in the bonds of iniquity, you are in the gall of bitterness. God deliver you for his name's sake.

Nor do I intend to use this text in an address to those who are in the habit of formal prayer, though there are many such. Taught from their childhood to utter certain sacred words, they have carried through youth, and even up to manhood, the same practice. I will not discuss that question just now, whether the practice of teaching children a form of prayer is proper or not. I would not do it. Children should be instructed in the meaning of prayer, and their little minds should be taught to pray; but it should be rather the matter of prayer than the words of prayer that should be suggested; and I think they should be taught to use their own words, and to speak unto God in such phrases and terms as their own child-like capacities, assisted by a mother's love, may be able to suggest. Full many there are who from early education grow up habituated to some form of words, which either stands in lieu of the heart's devotion, or cripples its free exercise. No doubt there may be true prayer linked with a form, and the soul of many a saint has gone up to heaven in some holy collect, or in the words of some beautiful liturgy; but for all that, we are absolutely certain that tens of thousands use the mere language without heart or soul, under the impression that they are praying. I consider the form of prayer to be no more prayer than a coach may be called

a horse; the horse will be better without the coach, travel much more rapidly, and find himself much more at ease; he may drag the coach, it is true, and still travel well. Without the heart of prayer, the form is no prayer; it will not stir or move, it is simply a vehicle that may have wheels that might move; but it has no inner force or power within itself to propel it. Flatter not yourselves that your devotion has been acceptable to God, you that have been merely saluting the ears of the Most High with forms. They have been only mockeries, when your heart has been absent. What though a parliament of bishops should have composed the words you use! what though they should be absolutely faultless! ay, what if they should even be inspired, or though you have used them a thousand times, yet have you never prayed if you consider that the repetition of the form be prayer. No! there is more than the chatter of the tongue in genuine supplication; more than the repetition of words in truly drawing near to God. Take care lest with the form of godliness you neglect the power, and go down to the pit, having a lie in your right hand, but not the truth in your heart.

What I do intend, however, is to address this text to the true people of God, who understand the sacred art of prayer and are prevalent therein; but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have restrained prayer. If there be no other person in this congregation to whom the preacher will speak personally, he feels shamefully conscious that he will have to speak very plainly to himself. We know that our prayers are heard; we are certain—it is not a question with us—that there is an efficacy in the divine

office of intercession; and yet (oh, how we should blush when we make the confession!) we must acknowledge that we do restrain prayer. Now, inasmuch as we speak to those who grieve and repent that they should so have done, we shall use but little sharpness; but we shall try to use much plainness of speech. Let us see how and in what respect we have restrained prayer.

Do you not think, dear friends, that we often restrain prayer in the fewness of the occasions that we set apart for supplication? From hoary tradition and modern precedents we have come to believe that the morning should be opened with the offering of prayer, and that the day should be shut in with the nightly sacrifice. We do ill if we neglect those two seasons of prayer. Do you not think that often in the morning we rise so near to the time of labour, when duty calls us to our daily avocation, that we hurry through the wonted exercises with unseemly haste, instead of diligently seeking the Lord and earnestly calling upon his name? And even at night, when we are very weary and jaded, it is just possible that our prayer is uttered somewhere between sleeping and waking. Is not this restraining prayer? And throughout the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, if we continue thus to pray, and this be all, how small an amount of true supplication will have gone up to heaven! I trust there are none here present who profess to be followers of Christ, who do not also practise prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is so much in accord with the genius and spirit of the gospel, and that it is so commended by the

example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency. Now, how often this family worship is conducted in a slovenly manner! An inconvenient hour is fixed; and a knock at the door, a ring at the bell, the call of a customer, may hurry the believer from his knees to go and attend to his worldly concerns. Of course, many excuses might be offered, but the fact would still remain, that in this way we often restrain prayer. And then, when you come up to the house of God—I hope you do not come up to this Tabernacle without prayer—but yet I fear we do not all pray as we should, even when in the place dedicated to it. There should always be a devout prayer lifted up to heaven, as soon as you enter the place where you would meet with God. What a preparation is often made to appear in the assembly! some of you get here half an hour before the service commences; if there were no talking, if each one of you looked into the Bible, or if the time was spent in silent ejaculation, what a cloud of holy incense would go smoking up to heaven!

I think it would be comely for you and profitable for us if, as soon as the minister enters the pulpit, you engaged yourselves to plead with God for him. For me I may especially say it is desirable. I claim it at your hands above every other man. With this overwhelming congregation, and with the terrible responsibility of so numerous a church, and with the word spoken here published within a few hours, and disseminated over the country, scattered throughout all Europe, nay, throughout the length and breadth and to the ends of the earth, I may well ask you to lift up your hearts in supplication that

the words spoken may be those of truth and soberness, directed of the Holy Spirit, and made mighty through God, like arrows shot from his own bow, to find a target in the hearts that he means to bless. That should be certainly a time of prayer. And on going home, with what earnestness should we ask the Master to let what we have heard live in our hearts. We lose very much of the effects of our Sabbaths through not pleading with God on the Saturday night for a blessing upon the day of rest, and through not also pleading at the end of the Sunday, beseeching him to make that which we have heard abide in our memories, and appear in our actions. We have restrained prayer, I fear, in the fewness of the occasions. Indeed, brethren, every part of the day and every day of the week should be an occasion for prayer. Ejaculations such as these, "Oh, would that!" "Lord, save me!" "Help me!" "More light, Lord!" "Teach me!" "Guide me!" and a thousand such, should be constantly going up from our hearts to the throne of God. You may enjoy a refreshing solitude, if you please, in the midst of crowded Cheapside, or contrariwise you may have your head in the whirl of a busy crowd when you have retired to your closet. It is not so much where we are as in what state our heart is. Let the regular seasons for devotion be constantly attended to. These things ought ye to have done; but let your heart be habitually in a state of prayer; ye must not leave this undone. Oh that we prayed more, that we set apart more time for it! Good Bishop Farrar had an idea in his head which he carried out. Being a man of some substance, and having some twenty-four persons in his household,

he divided the day, and there was always some person engaged either in holy song or else in devout supplication through the whole of the twenty-four hours; never was there a moment when the censer ceased to smoke or the altar was without its sacrifice. Happy shall it be for us when, day without night, we shall circle the throne of God rejoicing; but till then let us emulate the ceaseless praise of seraphs before the throne, continually drawing near unto God, and making supplication and thanksgiving.

But to proceed to a second remark. Dear friends, I think it will be very clear, upon a little reflection, that we constantly restrain prayer by not having our hearts in a proper state when we come to its exercise. We rush into prayer too often; we would think it necessary if we were to address the Queen that our petition should be prepared; but often we dash before the throne of God as though it were but some common house of call, without even having a thought in our minds of what we are going for. Now just let me suggest some few things which I think should always be subjects of meditation before our season of prayer, and I think, if you confess that you have not thought of this, you will also be obliged to acknowledge that you have restrained prayer.

We should, before prayer, meditate upon him to whom it is to be addressed. Let our thoughts be directed to the living and true God. Let me remember that he is omnipotent, then I shall ask large things. Let me remember that he is very tender, and full of compassion, then I shall ask little things and be minute in my supplication. Let me remember the greatness of

his covenant, then I shall come very boldly. Let me remember, also, that his faithfulness is like the great mountains, that his promises are sure to all the seed, then I shall ask very confidently, for I shall be persuaded that he will do as he has said. Let me fill my soul with the reflection of the greatness of his majesty, then I shall be struck with awe; with the equal greatness of his love, then I shall be filled with delight. We could not but pray better than we do if we meditated more before prayer upon the God whom we address.

Then, let me meditate also upon the way through which my prayer is offered; let my soul behold the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat; before I venture to draw near to God, let me go to Gethsemane and see the Saviour as he prays. Let me stand in holy vision at the foot of Calvary and see his body rent, that the veil which parted my soul from all access to God might be rent too, that I might come close to my Father, even to his feet. Oh, dear friends, I am sure if we thought about the way of access in prayer, we should be more mighty in it, and our neglect of so doing has led us to restrain prayer.

And yet, again, ought I not before prayer to be duly conscious of my many sins? Oh! when I hear men pray cold, careless prayers, surely they forget that they are sinners, or else, abjuring gaudy words and flowing periods, they would smite upon their breast with the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" they would come to the point at once, with force and fervency. "I, black, unclean, defiled, condemned by the law, make my appeal unto thee, O God!" What prostration of

spirit, what zeal, what fervour, what earnestness, and then, consequently, what prevalence would there be if we were duly sensible of our sin!

If we can add to this a little meditation upon what our needs are, how much better we should pray! We often fail in prayer because we come without an errand, not having thought of what our necessities are; but if we have reckoned up that we need pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation; that besides the blessings of this life we need that our decaying graces should be revived, that such and such a temptation should be removed, and that through such and such a trial we should be carried, and prove more than conquerors; then, coming with an errand, we should speed before the Most High. But we bring bowls to the altar that have no bottom, and if the treasure should be put in them it would fall through. We do not know what we want, and therefore we ask not for what we really need; we affect to lay our necessities before the Lord, without having duly considered how great our necessities are. See thyself as an abject bankrupt; weak, sick, dying, and this will make thee plead. See thy necessities deep as the ocean, broad as the expanse of heaven—this will make thee cry. There will be no restraining of prayer, beloved, when we have got a due sense of our soul's poverty; but because we think we are rich and increased in goods, and we have need of nothing, therefore it is that we restrain prayer before God.

How well it would be for us if before prayer we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day—what courage that would give us to ask for more! the deliverances we

have experienced through our life—how boldly should we plead to be delivered yet again! He that hath been with me in six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh. Do but remember how thou didst pass through the fires, and wast not burnt, and thou shouldst be confident that the flame will not kindle upon thee now. Christian, remember how when thou passedst through the rivers aforetime he was with thee; and surely thou mayst plead with him to deliver thee from the flood that now threatens to inundate thee. Think of the past ages too, of what he did of old, when he brought forth his people out of Egypt, and of all the mighty deeds which he has done—are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? Plead all these, and say unto him in thy supplications:—"Oh! thou that art a God that heareth prayer, hear me, and now send me an answer of peace!" I think, without needing to point that arrow, you can see which way I would shoot. Because we do not come to the throne of grace in a proper state of supplication, therefore it is that too often we restrain prayer before God.

Now, thirdly, it is not to be denied by a man who is conscious of his own error, that in the duty of prayer itself we are too often straitened in our own bowels and do restrain prayer. Prayer has been differently divided by different authors. We might roughly say of it, prayer consists, first, of invocation, "Our Father, which art in heaven." We begin by stating the title and our own apprehension of the glory and majesty of the Person whom we address. Do you not think, dear friends, that we fail here, restrain prayer here? Oh! how we ought to sound forth his praises! I think on the

Sabbath it is always the minister's special duty to bring out the titles of the MIGHTY ONE—"King of kings, and Lord of lords!" He is not to be addressed in common terms. How should we endeavour, as we search the Scripture through, to find those mighty phrases which the ancient saints were wont to apply to Jehovah! And how should we make his temple ring with his glory, and make our closet full of that holy adoration with which prayer must always be linked. "Oh! good heaven," I think the rebuking angel might say, "thou thinkest that he is even such a one as thyself, and thou talkest not to him as to the God of the whole earth, but, as though he were a man, thou dost address him in slighting and unseemly terms." Let all our invocations come more deeply from our souls' reverence to the Most High, and let us address him not in high-sounding words of fleshly homage, but still in words which set forth our awe and our reverence while they express his majesty and the glory of his holiness.

From invocation we usually go to confession, and how often do we fail here! In your closet, are you in the habit of confessing your real sins to God? Do you not find, brethren, a tendency to acknowledge that sin which is common to all men, but not that which is certainly peculiar to you? We are all Sauls in our way, we want to spare the best of the cattle and the sheep; those favourite sins, those Agag sins, it is not so easy to hew them in pieces before the Lord. The right eye sin! happy is that Christian who has learned to pluck it out by confession. The right hand sin! he is blessed and well taught who aims the axe at that sin, and cuts it from him. But no, we say

we have sinned—we are willing to use the terms of any general confession that any church may publish; but to say, "Lord, thou knowest I love the world and the things of the world; I am covetous;" or to say, "Lord, thou knowest I was envious of So-and-so, because he shone brighter than I did at such-and-such a public meeting; Lord, I was jealous of such-and-such a member of the church, because I evidently saw that he was preferred before me;" and for the husband also to confess before God that he has been overbearing, that he has spoken rashly to a child; for a wife to acknowledge that she has been wilful, that she has had a fault—this would be *letting out* prayer; but the hiding of these things is *restraining* prayer, and we shall surely come under that charge of having restrained prayer, unless we make our private confessions of sin very explicit, coming to the point. I have thought, in teaching children in the Sabbath-school, we should not so much talk about sin as the sins in which children most commonly indulge, such as little thefts, naughty tempers, disobedience to parents; these are the things that children should confess. Men in the dawn of their manhood should confess those ripening evil imaginations, those lustful things that rise in the heart; while the man in business should ever make this a point, to see most to the sins which attack business men. I have no doubt that I might be very easily led in my confession to look to all the offences I may have committed against the laws of business, because I should not need to deal very hardly with myself there, for I do not have the temptations of these men; and I should not wonder if some of you merchants will

find it very easy to examine yourselves according to a code that is proper to me, but not to you. Let the workman pray to God as a workman, and confess the sins common to his craft. Let the trader examine himself according to his standing, and let each man make his confession like the confessions of old, when every one confessed apart—the mother apart and the daughter apart, the father apart and the son apart. Let each one thus make a clean breast of the matter, and I am sure there will not be so much need to say we have restrained prayer before God.

As to the next part of prayer, which is petition, lamentably indeed do we all fail. We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We are ready enough to ask for deliverance from trial, but how often we forget to ask that it may be sanctified to us. We are quite ready to say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" how often, however, do we fail to ask that he would give us the bread which cometh down from heaven, and enable us to feed blessedly—to feed upon his flesh and his blood! Brethren, we come before God with such little desires, and the desires we get have such little fervency in them, and when we get the fervency we so often fail to get the faith which grasps the promise and believes that God will give, that in all these points, when we come to the matter of spreading our wants before God, we restrain prayer.

Oh, for the Luthers that can shake the gates of heaven by supplication! Oh, for men that can lay hold upon the golden knocker of heaven's gate, and make it ring and ring again as if they meant it to be heard! Cold prayers court a denial. God hears by fire, and the God

that answers by fire let him be God. But there must be prayer in Elijah's heart first—fire in Elijah's heart first—before the fire will come down in answer to the prayer. Our fervency goeth up to heaven, and then God's grace, which gave us the fervency, cometh down and giveth it the answer.

But you know, too, that prayer has in it—all true prayer has in it—thanksgiving. "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever." What prayer is complete without the doxology? And here, too, we restrain prayer. We don't praise, and bless, and magnify the Lord as we should. If our hearts were more full of gratitude, our expressions would be far more noble and comprehensive when we speak forth his praise. I wish I could put this so plainly that every Christian might mourn on account of his sin, and mend his ways. But, indeed, it is only mine to speak; it is my Master's to open your eyes, to let you see, and to set you upon the solemnly important duty of self-examination. In this respect I am sure even the prayers that you and I have offered to-day may well cry out against us and say, "Thou hast restrained prayer."

Yet, again, I fear also we must all join in acknowledging a serious fault with regard to the after-part of our prayers. When prayer is done, do you not think we very much restrain it? For after prayer we often go into the world immediately—that may be absolutely necessary—but we go there, and leave behind us what we ought to carry with us. When we have got into a good frame in prayer, we should consider that this is like the meat which the angel gave to Elijah that he might go on his journey—on the forty days' journey—in its

strength. Have we felt heavenly minded? yet the moment we cross the threshold and get into the family or business, where is the heavenly mind? Oh, to get prayer, inwrought prayer—not the surface prayer, as though it were a sort of sacred masquerading after all—to have it inside, in the warp and woof of our being, till prayer becomes a part of ourselves; then, brethren, we have not restrained it. We get hot in our closets—when I say "we," oh, how few can say so much as that!—but still we get hot in our closets, and go out into the world, into the draughts of its temptations, without wrapping ourselves about with promises, and we catch well nigh our death of cold. Oh, to carry that heat and fervour with us! You know as you carry a piece of hot iron along, how it begins soon to return to its common ordinary appearance and the heat is gone. How hot, then, we ought to make ourselves in prayer, that we may burn the longer; and how all day long we ought to keep thrusting the iron into the fire again, so that when it ceases to glow, it may go into the hot embers once more and the flame may glow upon it, and we may once again be brought into a vehement heat. But we are not careful enough to keep up the grace and seek to nurture and to cherish the young child, which God seems to give in the morning into our hands that we may nurse it for him.

Old Master Dyer speaks of locking up his heart by prayer in the morning and giving Christ the key. I am afraid we do the opposite—we lock up our hearts in the morning and give the devil the key, and think that he will be honest enough not to rob us. Ah! it is in bad hands when it is trusted with him; and he

keeps filching all day long the precious things that were in the casket, until at night it's all empty, and needs to be filled over again. Would God we put the key in Christ's hands, by looking up to him all the day!

I think, too, that after prayer we often fail in unbelief. We don't expect God to hear us. If God were to hear some of you, you would be more surprised than with the greatest novelty that could occur. We ask blessings, but do not think of having them. When you and I were children, and had a little piece of garden, we sowed some seed one day, and the next morning, before breakfast, we went to see if it was up; and the next day, seeing that no appearance of the green blade could be discovered, we began to move the mould to look after our seeds. Ah! we were children then. I wish we were children now, with regard to our prayers. We should go out the next morning to look and see if they had begun to sprout, and disturb the ground a bit to look after our prayers, for fear they should have miscarried. Do you believe God hears prayer? I saw the other day in a newspaper, a little sketch concerning myself, in which the author, who is evidently very friendly, gives a much better description of me than I deserve; but he offers me one rather pointed rebuke. It would appear I was preaching at the time in a tent. Only part of the people were covered. It began to rain just before prayer, and one petition was, "O Lord, be pleased to grant us favourable weather for this service, and command the clouds that they rain not upon this assembly." Now he thought this very preposterous. To say the least, it was rash, if not blasphemous. He admits it did not rain a drop after it. Still, of course,

he did not infer that God heard and answered the prayer. If I had asked for a rain of grace, it had been quite credible that God would send that; but when you ask him not to send you a temporal rain, that is fanaticism. To think that God meddles with the clouds at the wish of a man, or that he may answer us in temporal things, is pronounced absurd. I bless God, however, that I fully believe the absurdity, preposterous as it may appear. I know that God hears prayer in temporal things. I know it by as clear a demonstration as ever proposition in Euclid was solved. I know it by abundant facts and incidents which my own life has revealed. God does hear prayer. The majority of people do not think that he does. At least, if he does, they suppose that it is in some high, clerical, mysterious, unknown sense. As to ordinary things ever happening as the result of prayer, they account it a delusion. "The bank of faith!" How many have said it is a bank of nonsense; and yet there are many who have been able to say, "We could write as good a book as Huntington's 'Bank of Faith,' that would be no more believed than Huntington's Bank was, though it might be even more true."

We restrain prayer, I am sure, by not believing our God. We ask a favour, which, if granted, we should attribute to accident rather than ascribe it to grace, and we do not receive it; then the next time we come of course we cannot pray, because unbelief has cut the sinews of prayer, and left us powerless before the throne.

My dear friends, is it not very clear that in many of our daily actions we do that which necessitates restrained prayer?

You are a professor of religion. After you have been to a party of ungodly people, can you pray? You are a merchant, and profess to be a follower of Christ; when you engage in a hazardous speculation, and you know you ought not, can you pray? Or when you have had a heavy loss in business, and will repine against God, and will not say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"—can you pray? Pity the man that can sin and pray too. In a certain sense, Brooks was right when he said, "Praying will make you leave off sinning, or else sin will make you leave off praying." Of course that is not meant in the absolute sense of the term; but as to certain sins, especially gross sins—and some of the sins to which God's people are liable are gross sins—I am certain they cannot come before their Father's face with the confidence they had before, after having been rolling in the mire, or wandering in the By-path Meadow. Look at your own child; he meets you in the morning with a smiling face, so pleased; he asks what he likes of you, and you give it him. He has been doing wrong, he knows he has; and you frowned on him; you have chastened him. How does he come? He may come because he is a child, and with tears in his eyes because he is a penitent; but he cannot ask with the power he once had. Look at a king's favourite; as long as he feels he is in the king's favour, he will take up your suit and plead for you. Ask him to-morrow whether he will do you a good turn, he says, "No, I am out of favour; I don't feel as if I could speak now." A Christian is not out of covenant favour, but he may be experimentally under a cloud; he loses

the light of God's countenance; and then he feels he cannot plead, his prayers become weak and feeble. Take heed unto yourselves, and consider your ways. The path of declension is very abrupt in some parts. We may go on gradually declining in prayer till faith grows weak, and love cold, and patience is exhausted. We may go on for years, and maintain a consistent profession, but all of a sudden the road which had long been descending at a gradual incline may come to a precipice, and we may fall, and that when we little think of it; we may have ruined our reputation, blasted our comfort, destroyed our usefulness, and we may have to go to our graves with a sword in our bones because of sin. Stop while you may —stop, believer. Now stop, and guard against the temptation. I charge you by the trials you must meet with, by the temptations that surround you, by the corruptions that are within, by the assaults that come from hell, and by the trials that come from heaven, watch in this matter—"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." To this church I speak especially. What hath God wrought for us! When we were a few people, what intense agony of prayer we had! We have had prayer-meetings in Park Street that have moved our souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging Jerusalem, each man determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession; and the blessing came upon us, such that we had not room to receive it. The hallowed cloud rests o'er us still; the holy drops still fall. Will ye now cease from intercession? At the borders of the promised land will ye turn back to the wilderness, when God is with us,

and the standard of a King is in the midst of our armies? Will ye now fail in the day of trial? Who knoweth but ye have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Who knoweth but that he will preserve in the land a small company of poor people who fear God intensely, hold the faith earnestly, and love God vehemently; that infidelity may be driven from the high places of the earth; that Naphtali again may be a people made triumphant in the high places of the field? God of heaven, grant this! Oh, let us restrain prayer no longer! You that have never prayed, may you be taught to pray. "God be merciful to me a sinner," uttered from your heart, with your eye upon the cross, will bring you a gracious answer, and ye shall go on your way rejoicing.

Holiness Demanded.

"Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—
Hebrews xii. 14.

ONE feels most happy when blowing the trumpet of jubilee, proclaiming peace to broken hearts, freedom to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound. But God's watchman has another trumpet, which he must sometimes blow; for thus saith the Lord unto him:—"Sound an alarm in Zion, sound an alarm in my holy mountain." Times there are when we must ring the tocsin; men must be startled from their sleep; they must be roused up to inquire:—"What are we? Where are we? Whither are we going?" Nor is it altogether amiss for the wisest virgins to look to the oil in their vessels, and for the soundest Christians to be sometimes constrained to examine the foundations of their hope, to trace back their evidences to the beginning, and make an impartial survey of their state before God. Partly for this reason, but with a further view to the awakening and stirring up of those who are destitute of all holiness, I have selected for our topic, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said this is the imputed holiness of Christ. Do they not know, when they so speak, that, by an open perversion, they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the verse, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Now, the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace; and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace; this is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace." We are to follow holiness—this must be practical holiness too; the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness." The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow; I mean if we look at it imputatively. That we have at once; it is given to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed; it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus. This is another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as every one can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God, and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul, by which a man is made like God, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it.

There it stands, whether men like it or not. There are some who, for especial reasons best known to themselves, do not like it; just as no thieves ever like policemen or gaols—yet there it stands, and it means no other than what it says: "Without holiness"—practical, personal, active, vital holiness—"no man shall see the Lord." Dealing with this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth and all enjoyment of Christ in heaven, I shall endeavour, first, to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he hath this holiness or not; secondly, to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and then, thirdly, to plead hard in Christ's stead with those who are lovers of gain, that they may bethink themselves ere time be over and opportunity past.

I. First, then, brethren, ye are anxious to know whether ye have holiness or not. Now, if our text said that without perfection of holiness no man could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one, who knows his own heart, ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will. It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," mark; but "holiness." This holiness is a thing of growth. It may be in the soul as the grain of mustard-seed, and yet not developed; it may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realised—a groaning, a panting, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow till the mustard-seed shall become a tree. Holiness, in a regenerate heart, is but an infant; it is not matured—perfect it is in all its parts,

but not perfect in its development. Hence, when we find many imperfections and many failings in ourselves, we are not to conclude that, therefore, we have no interest in the grace of God. This would be altogether apart from the meaning of the text. As it is not so much my present purpose to show what this holiness is as what it is not, I think, while I am endeavouring to undeceive those who have not this holiness, those who are not condemned may reasonably draw some comfortable inferences as to their own pursuit of this inestimable grace.

Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on without holiness. First, *there is the Pharisee.* The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies. He pays tithes of all that he possesses—his anise, his mint, his cummin—everything, even to the tithe of his parsley-bed, he gives. He gives alms to the poor, he wears his phylacteries, and makes broad the borders of his garment—in fact, anything and everything that is commanded ceremonially he most punctiliously attends to; but all the while he is devouring widows' houses, he is living in the practice of secret sin, and he thinks that by ceremonies he shall be able to propitiate God and be accepted. Sinner, pharisaic sinner, hear the death-knell of thy hopes tolled out by this verse—"Without holiness"—and that is a thing thou knowest nothing of—"no man shall see the Lord." Thy ceremonies are vain and frivolous; even if God ordained them, seeing thou puttest thy trust in them, they shall utterly deceive and fail thee, for they do not constitute even a part of holiness. Thou canst not see God till thy heart be changed, till thy nature be renewed, till thine

actions, in the tenor of them, shall become such as God would have them to be. Mere ceremonialists think they can get on without holiness. Fell delusion! Do I speak to any Ritualist who finds himself awkwardly situated here? Do I speak to any Romanist who has entered into a place where not the works of the law, but the righteousness of Christ is preached? Let me remind you again, very solemnly, my hearer, that those fine hopes of yours, built upon the manœuvres of the priests, and upon your own performances, shall utterly fail you in that day when most you shall need them. Your soul shall then stand in shivering nakedness when most you need to be well equipped before the eyes of God. These men know not true holiness.

Then there is *the moralist.* He has never done anything wrong in his life. He is not very observant of ceremonies, it is true; perhaps he even despises them; but he treats his neighbour with integrity, he believes that, so far as he knows, if his ledger be examined it bears no evidence of a single dishonest deed. As touching the law he is blameless: no one ever doubted the purity of his manner; from his youth up his carriage has been amiable, his temperament what every one could desire, and the whole tenor of his life is such that we may hold him up as an example of moral propriety. Ah, but this is not holiness before God. Holiness excludes immorality, but morality does not amount to holiness; for morality may be but the cleaning of the outside of the cup and the platter, while the heart may be full of wickedness. Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objects, the motives of men. Morality doth but skim the surface,

holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep; holiness requires that the heart be set on God, and that it beat with love to him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that. Methinks I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse, well washed and robed, and even embalmed with spices; but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life. Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms; holiness waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars. These twain are of opposite nature: the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies. It is not said in heaven, "Moral, moral, moral art thou, O God!" but "Holy, holy, holy art thou, O Lord!" You note the difference between the two words at once. The one how icy cold! the other, oh, how animated! Such is mere morality, and such is holiness! Moralist!—I know I speak to many such—remember that your best morality will not save you; you must have more than this, for without holiness—and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God—without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Another individual who thinks to get on without holiness, and who does win a fair reputation in certain circles, is the *experimentalist.* You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward; to tell you the truth, there is no life at all; but their own profession is that it is all inward. I have had the misery to be acquainted with one or two such. They are voluble talkers, dis-

coursing with much satisfaction of themselves, but bitter critics of all who differ from them in the slightest degree; having an ordained standard as to the proper length to which Christian experience should go; cutting off everybody's head who was taller than they were, and stretching every man out by the neck who happened to be a little too short. I have known some of these persons. If a minister should say "duty" in the sermon, they would look as if they would never hear him again. He must be a dead legalist—a "letter man," I think they call him. Or, if they are exhorted to holiness, why, they tell you they are perfect in Christ Jesus, and therefore there is no reason why they should have any thought of perfection in the work of the Spirit within. Groaning, grunting, quarrelling, denouncing—not "following peace with all," but stirring up strife against all—this is the practice of their religion. This is the summit to which they climb, and from which they look down with undisguised contempt upon all those worms beneath who are striving to serve God and to do good in their day and generation. Now I pray you to remember that against such men as these there are many passages of Scripture most distinctly levelled; I think this is one among many others. Sirs, you may say what you will about what you dream you have felt, you may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced; but if your own outward life be unjust, unholy, ungenerous, and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The moment you know a man that is drunk on a Saturday night, and then enjoys So-and-so's preaching on a

Sunday; the moment you know certain parties who can tell you what a child of God should be, and then appears himself exactly what he should not be, just quit his company and let him go to his own place, and where that is Judas can tell you. Oh, beware of such high-fliers, with their waxen wings, mounting up to the very sun—how great shall be their fall, when he that searches all hearts shall open the book and say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but still there are some among us still—*opinionists*, who think they can do without holiness. These, too, it has sometimes been my misfortune to know. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one, for there are as many Arminians as Calvinists in this line—they think they have got hold of *the* truth, that they are the men, and that when they die the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. They can

> "A hair divide
> Betwixt the west and north-west side."

There is no question about their being masters in divinity. If degrees went according to merit, they would have been dubbed "D.D." years ago, for they know everything, and are not a little proud that they do. And yet these men live a life that is a stench even in the nostrils of men who make no profession of religion. We have some of this kind in all congregations. I wish you would not come here. If one could

do you good we might be glad to see you, but then you do so much hurt to the rest, and bring so much discredit upon the cause at large that your room would be better than your company. You listen to the sermon, and sometimes perhaps have the condescension to speak well of the preacher, who wishes you would not. Yet after the sermon is done, on the road home, there may be a public-house door just opened at one o'clock, and the brother refreshes himself, and perhaps does so many times. Even if it be the holy day it is all the same, and yet he is a dear and precious child of God. No doubt he is in his own estimation. And then during the week he lives as others live, and acts as others act, and yet congratulates himself that he knows the truth, and understands the doctrines of the gospel, and therefore he will surely be saved! Out with thee, man! out with thee! Down with thy hopes! "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

> "No big words of ready talkers,
> No mere doctrines will suffice;
> Broken hearts, and humble walkers—
> These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work, this is what the Lord wants. You may perish as well with true doctrines as with false, if you pervert the true doctrine into licentiousness. You may go to hell by the cross as surely as you may by the theatre, or by the vilest of sin. You may perish with the name of Jesus on your lips, and with a sound creed sealed on your very bosom, for, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he

also reap." Now if any of you belong to either of these four classes, I think you cannot help knowing it, and, being destitute of gospel holiness, you have good cause to bewail your character and tremble for your destiny.

But to help you still further, brethren, that man is destitute of true holiness *who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow.* Oh, to think of our past lives! There were some of us who knew the Lord at fifteen years of age, but those fifteen years of unregeneracy—we can never forget them! Others may say, "We did not know him till we were fifty or sixty." Ah! my dear brethren, you have much to weep over, but so have those of us who knew the Lord in early life. I can look back upon God's mercy with delight, but I hope I shall never be able to look back upon my sins with complacency. Whenever a man looks to any of his past faults and shortcomings, it ought to be through his tears. Some men recall their past lives and talk of their old sins, and seem to roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel. They live their sins over again. As it was said of Alexander—

> "He fought his battles o'er again,
> And twice he slew the slain."

There are those who revel in the memory of their iniquities. They live their life in imagination over again. They recollect some deed of lewdness or some act of infamy, and as they think it over they dare not repeat it, for their profession would be spoiled; but they love the thought and cultivate it with a vicious partiality. Thou art no friend to true holiness, but an utter stranger to it unless the past causes

thee profound sorrow and sends thee to thy knees to weep and hope that God for Christ's sake has blotted it out.

And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness *if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation.* Have I a man here, a professed Christian, who has formed some design in his mind to indulge the flesh and to enjoy forbidden dainties when an opportunity occurs? Ah! sir, if thou canst think of those things that may come in thy way without tremor, I suspect thee: I would thou wouldst suspect thyself. Since the day that some of us knew Christ we have always woke up in the morning with a fear lest we should that day disown our Master. And there is one fear which sometimes haunts me, and I must confess it, and were it not for faith in God it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man his life was pure before God, and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious lustre; but when grey hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God's heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end, lest haply in some evil hour some temptation should come upon me and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind—"He that thinketh he standeth may yet fall"? and the very possibility of such a thing—does it not drive you to God's mercy-seat, and do you not cry, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe"? There is no doxology

in Scripture which I enjoy more than that—"Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before his presence with exceeding joy, to him be glory." I say you are a stranger to holiness of heart if you can look forward to a future fall without great alarm.

Again, methinks you have great cause for questioning, *unless your holiness is uniform;* I mean, if your life is angelic abroad and devilish at home. You must suspect that it is at home that you are what you are. I question whether any man is much better than he is thought to be by his wife and family, for they, after all, see the most of us, and know the truth about us; and if, sir, though you seem in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in the shop, to be amiable, Christian, and God-like to the passer-by, your children should have to mark your unkindness, your want of fatherly affection for their souls; and your wife has to complain of your domineering, of the absence of everything that is Christ-like, you may shrewdly suspect that there is something wrong in the state of your heart. O sirs, true holiness is a thing that will keep by night and by day, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea. That man is not right with God who would not do the same in the dark that he would do in the light; who does not feel, "If every eye should look upon me I would not be different from what I am when no eye gazes upon me; that which keeps me right is not the judgment and opinions of men, but the eye of the Omnipresent and the heart of the Supreme that loves me." Is your obedience uniform? Some farmers I know in the country maintain a creditable profession in the village

where they live; they go to a place of worship, and very good people they are: but there is a farmers' dinner once a-year; it is only once a-year—we will not say anything about how they get home—the less that is said the better for their reputation. "It is only once a-year," they tell us; but holiness does not allow of dissipation even "once a-year." And we know some who, when they go on the Continent, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there;" and therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded, and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, sirs, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate it is good for nothing. I like the remark which I heard from one of the sailors on board ship in crossing the Irish Channel. A passenger said, to try him, "Wouldn't you like to attend a certain place of amusement?" which he mentioned. "Well, sir," said the sailor, "I go there as often as ever I like; I have a religion that lets me go as often as I think proper." "Oh, how is that?" he inquired. "Because I never like to go at all," was the reply; "I do not keep away because of any law, for it is no trial to me; but I should be unhappy to go there." Surely the fish, were it asked if it did not wish to fly, would reply, "I am not unhappy because I am not allowed to fly; it is not my element." So the Christian can say, "I am not unhappy because I do not spend my nights in worldly society—because I do not mingle with their revelry and wantonness; it is not my element, and I could not enjoy it. Should you drag me into it, it would be a martyrdom which to my spirit would be alike repulsive and painful." You are a stranger to holiness

if your heart does not feel that it revolts at the thought of sin.

Then, let me further remark, that *those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy.* We know of some who will not lend themselves to perpetrate an unseemly jest, yet if another does so, and there is a laugh excited upon some not over-decent remark, they laugh, and thus give sanction to the impropriety. If there is a low song sung in their hearing, which others applaud, though they cannot quite go the length of joining in the plaudits, still they secretly enjoy it; they betray a sort of gratification that they cannot disguise; they confess to a gusto that admires the wit while it cannot endorse the sentiment. They are glad the minister was not there; they are glad to think the deacon did not happen to see them just at that moment; yet still, if there could be a law established to make the thing pretty respectable, they would not mind. Some of you know people who fall into this snare. There are professing Christians who go where you at one time could not go, but seeing that they do it, you go too, and there you see others engaged in sin, and it becomes respectable because you give it countenance. There are many things in this world that would be execrated if it were not that Christian men go to them, and the ungodly men say, "Well, if it is not righteous, there is not much harm in it after all; it is innocent enough if we keep within bounds." Mind! mind! mind, professor, if your heart begins to suck in the sweets of another man's sin it is unsound in the sight of God: if thou canst even wink at another man's lust, depend upon it thou wilt soon

shut thine eye on thine own, for we are always more severe with other men than we are with ourselves. There must be an absence of the vital principle of godliness when we can become partakers of other men's sins by applauding or joining with them in the approval of them. Let us examine ourselves scrupulously, then, whether we be among those who have no evidences of that holiness without which no man can see God.

But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation. If you and I, as in the sight of God, can feel to-night that we would be holy if we could; that there is not a sin we wish to spare; that we would be like Jesus—O that we could! —that we would sooner suffer affliction than ever run into sin and displease our God; if our heart be really right in God's statutes, then, despite all the imperfections we bemoan, we have holiness, wherein we may rejoice, and we may see the Lord.

II. Now, then, for the second point very briefly indeed: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" that is to say, no man can have communion with God in this life, and no man can have enjoyment with God in the life to come without holiness. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" If thou goest with Belial dost thou think Christ will go with thee? Will Christ be a pot companion for thee? Dost thou expect to take the Lord of love and mercy with thee to the haunts of sin? Professor, dost thou think the just and holy One will stand at thy counter to be co-trader with thee in thy tricks? What thinkest thou, O man! wouldst thou make Christ a sharer of thy guilt? and yet he would be so if he had fellowship with thee in it.

Nay, if thou wilt go on in acts of unrighteousness and unholiness, Christ parts company with thee, or rather thou never didst have any fellowship with him. Thou hast gone out from us because thou wert not of us, for if thou hadst been of us doubtless thou wouldst have continued with us. And as to heaven, dost thou think to go there with thine unholiness? God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will he let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it. It is enough for him to bear with thine hypocrisies on earth; shall he have them flung in his own face in heaven? What, shall an unholy life utter its licentiousness in the golden streets? Shall there be sin in that higher and better paradise? No, no, God has sworn by his holiness—and he will not, he cannot lie—that those who are not holy, whom his Spirit has not renewed, who have not been by the regenerating power of the Holy One of Israel made to love that which is good and hate that which is evil, shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous. Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no man shall see God without holiness.

III. I come to my last point, which is, pleading with you. Doubtless there are some in this vast crowd who have some sort of longings after salvation and after heaven. My eye looks round; yes, sometimes it has been my wont to gaze with sorrow upon some few here whose case I know. Do I not remember one? he has been very often impressed, and so impressed too that he has not been able to sleep. Night after night he has prayed, he has wrestled with God, and there is only one thing in his way—and that is drink! strong drink!

By the time that Wednesday or Thursday comes round he begins to forget what he heard on Sunday. Sometimes he has taken the pledge and stood to it three months, but the passion has been too strong on him, and then he has given all resolutions and vows up, and has plunged into his besetting sin worse than before. Others I know in whom it is another sin. You are here now, are you? You do not come of a morning, and yet when you come at night you feel it very severely; but why not come here in the morning? Because your shop is open, and that shop seems to stand between you and any hope of salvation. There are others who say, "Well, now, if I go to hear that man, I must give up the vice that disquiets my conscience; but I cannot yet, I cannot yet." And you are willing to be damned for the sake of some paltry joy? Well, if you will be damned, it shall not be for want of reasoning with you and weeping over you. Let me put it to you—do you say you cannot give up the sin because of the profit? Profit! Profit, forsooth! "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What profit have you obtained hitherto? You have put it all into a bag full of holes; what you have earned one way you have spent another, and you know that if this were all you surely have not been any the better for it. Besides, what is profit when compared with your immortal soul? Oh, I adjure you, lose not gold for dross; lose not substance for shadows! Lose not your immortal soul for the sake of some temporary gain! But it is not profit with some of you, it is pleasure, it is a morbid passion. You feel, perhaps, for some particular sin which happens

to beset you, such an intense longing, and in looking back upon it afterwards you think you could give up everything but that. Young man, is it some secret sin which we must not mention, or is it some private guilt which is hidden from all hearts but thine own? O soul, what is this pleasure after all? Weigh it, weigh it; what does it come to? Is it equal to the pain it costs thee now, to the pangs of conscience, to the agonies of remorse? When an American doctor who had led a loose life came to die he seemed to wake up from a sort of stupor, and he said, "Find that word, find that word." "What word?" they said. "Why," he said, "that awful word—remorse!" He said it again—"Remorse!" and then, gathering up his full strength he fairly seemed to shriek it out—"*Remorse!*" "Write it," said he, "write it." It was written. "Write it with larger letters and let me gaze at it; underline it. And now," said he, "none of you know the meaning of that word, and may you never know it; it has an awful meaning in it, and I feel it now—*Remorse! Remorse!! Remorse!!!*" What, I say, is this pleasure contrasted with the results it brings in this life? and what, I ask, is this pleasure compared with the joys of godliness? Little as you may think I know of the joys of the world, yet so far as I can form a judgment, I can say that I would not take all the joys that earth can ever afford in a hundred years for one half-hour of what my soul has known in fellowship with Christ. We do have our sorrows, but, blessed be God, we do have our joys, and they are such joys—oh, such joys, such substance in them, and such reality and certainty, that we could not and would not exchange them for anything except

heaven in its fruition. And then, bethink thee, sinner, what are all these pleasures when compared with the loss of thy soul! There is a gentleman, high in position in this world, with fair lands and a large estate, who, when he took me by the button-hole after a sermon —and he never hears me preach without tears—said to me, "O, sir, it does seem such an awful thing that I should be such a fool." "And what for?" said I. "Why," he said, "for the sake of that court and of those gaieties of life, and of mere honour and dress and fashion, I am squandering away my soul. I know," he said, "I know the truth, but I do not follow it. I have been stirred in my heart to do it, but I shall go on as I have done before; I fear I shall sink back into the same state as before. Oh, what a fool I am," said he, "to choose pleasures that only last a little while, and then to be lost for ever and for ever." I pleaded hard with him, but I pleaded in vain; there was such intoxication in the gaiety of life that he could not leave it. Alas! alas! if we had to deal with sane men our preaching would be easy, but sin is a madness, such a madness that when men are bitten with it they will not be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But I hear one say, "It is impossible; I have tried it and I have broken down: I did try to get better, but I did not succeed; it is of no use, it cannot be done." You are right, my dear friend, and you are wrong. You are right, it is of no use going about it as you did; if you went in your own strength, holiness is a thing you cannot get; it is beyond you. The depth says, "It is not in me;" and the height saith, "It is not in me." You can no

more make yourself holy than you could create a world. But you are wrong to despair, for Christ can do it; he can do it for you, and he can begin it now. Believe on him and he will begin with you; in fact, that believing will be the fruit of his having begun with you. Trust him, and he that has overcome thy sins, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall come in and put to rout the Lion of the pit. He will bruise Satan under thy feet shortly. There is no corruption too strong for him to overcome, there is no habit too firm for him to break it. He can turn a lion to a lamb, and a raven to a dove. Trust him to save thee and he will do it, whatsoever thou mayst be, whatever thy past life may have been. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"—that is, he shall be saved from his sins and delivered from his evil practices; he shall be made a new man in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit, received through the medium of his faith. Believe, poor soul, that Christ is able to save thee and he will do it. He will be as good as thy faith and as good as his own word. May he now add his own blessing to the word we have spoken, and to the people who have heard it, for his own sake. Amen.

John Mark; or, Haste in Religion.

"And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."—Mark xiv. 50—52.

THIS little episode in the narrative of the evangelist is very singular. One wonders why it is introduced; but a moment's reflection will, I think, suggest a plausible reason. It strikes me that this "certain young man" was none other than Mark himself. He was probably asleep; and, aroused by a great clamour, he asked what it was about. The information was speedily given—"The guards have come to arrest Jesus of Nazareth." Moved by sudden impulse, not thinking of what he was doing, he rises from his bed, rushes down, pursues the troopers, dashes into the midst of their rank, as though he alone would attempt the rescue, when all the disciples had fled. The moment they lay hold upon him his heroic spasm is over; his enthusiasm evaporates; he runs away, leaves the cloth that was loosely wrapped about his body behind, and makes his escape. There have been many who acted like Mark since then. It seems to me that this digression from the main narrative is intended to point a moral. First, however, you will say, "Why

suppose it to be Mark?" I grant you it is merely a supposition, but yet it is supported by the strongest chain of probabilities, and will sufficiently account for the manner in which he has inserted it. Calvin, following Ambrose and Chrysostom, thinks it was John, albeit few modern critics attach much weight to that conjecture. I find that the more recondite critics of the modern school ascribe this transaction to Mark for these reasons:—It was common among the evangelists to relate transactions in which they themselves took part without mentioning their own names. This commonly occurs in the case of John, for instance. He bashfully keeps back his name when there is anything to his credit, and he does the same when it is to the reverse. I could quote one or two instances in the Gospel of Luke, and it is not at all remarkable that such a thing should have occurred in the case of Mark. Whoever it was, the only person likely to know it was the man himself. I cannot think that any one else would have been likely to tell it to Mark, and, therefore, I conceive it to have been himself; for he might scarcely have thought it worthy of recording if it had been told him by some one else; and it is not likely that any one to whom it had occurred would have felt it was much to his credit, and been likely to relate it to Mark with a view to its being recorded. Again, we know that such a transaction as this was quite in keeping with Mark's common character. We gather his character partly from the book which he has written: the evangel of Mark is the most impulsive of all the evangels. You are aware, and I have frequently mentioned it to you, that the word *eutheos*, translated "straightway," "forthwith,"

"immediately," is used a very great number of times by this evangelist in his book. He is a man who does everything straightway; full of impulse, dash, fire, flash; the thing must be done, and done forthwith. His gospel is of that description. You do not find many of Christ's sermons in Mark. He gives you a sketch, an outline. He had not perseverance enough to take the whole down; and he scarcely finishes the narration of the death of Christ. His book seems to break off abruptly, yet he is the most picturesque of all. There are pieces of imagination, and there are Hogarthian touches, in the sacred biography he writes, that are not to be found in Matthew, or Luke, or John. The man is a man of fire. He is all enthusiasm. Poetry has filled his soul, and, therefore, he dashes at the thing. He lacks in perseverance, and will hardly finish what he takes in hand; but yet there is a genius about him not altogether uncommon to Christian men in this age, and there are faults in him exceedingly common. Once more: the known life of John Mark tends to make it very probable that he would do such a thing as is referred to in the text. As soon as ever Paul and Barnabas set out on their missionary enterprise they were attended by Mark. As long as they were sailing across the blue waters, and as long as they were in the island of Cyprus, Mark stuck to them. Nay, while they travelled along the coast of Asia Minor, we find they had John Mark to be their minister; but the moment they went up into the inland countries, among the robbers and the mountain streams—as soon as ever the road began to be a little too rough, John Mark left them. His missionary zeal had oozed out. After a

short time there was a hot contention between Paul and Barnabas. Paul would not have Mark with him any longer. He could not trust him; he did not believe in these impulsive people, who could not hold on under difficulties; but Barnabas knowing him better—for Mark is sister's son to Barnabas—and feeling a kinsman's lenity to his faults, insists upon it that they should take John Mark; and the altercation grew so violent between Paul and Barnabas, that they separated on this account, and would not proceed together on their divine mission. Yet Barnabas was right. Paul was not wrong either. I think Barnabas was right in his mild judgment of Mark, for he was a sound believer at bottom, and, notwithstanding this fault, he was a real, true-hearted disciple. We find him afterwards reconciled entirely to the Apostle Paul. Paul says, "Send Mark, for he is profitable unto me for the ministry;" and we find Paul mentioning, with affection and love, "Mark as sister's son to Barnabas," which shows on the one hand the apostle's Christian candour and kindness, and on the other hand that Mark had retrieved his character by perseverance. Tradition says that Mark became the Bishop of Alexandria. We do not know whether it is correct or not, but it is likely enough that he was. Certainly he was with Paul at Rome, and the latter part of his life was spent with Peter at Babylon. See what a man he is. He goes to Rome, but he cannot stop there long. He has done his work in Rome. He is one of your fidgety people that do things all of a sudden; and away he is to Alexandria. But methinks he must have found a very congenial friend in Peter. He would be a blessing to Peter, and

Peter would be a blessing to him; for Peter's disposition was cast in something of the same mould. You will notice that Mark gives the most explicit account of Peter's fall. He enters very fully into it. I believe he received it from Peter *vivâ voce*, and Peter bade him write it down; and I think the modest spirit of Mark seemed to say, "Friend Peter, while the Holy Ghost moves me to tell thy fault and let it stand on record, he also constrains me to write mine as a sort of preface to it, for I, too, in my mad, hair-brain folly, would have run, unclothed as I was, upon the guard to rescue my Lord and Master, yet at the first sight of the rough legionaries, at the first gleam of their swords, away I fled, timid, faint-hearted, and afraid that I should be too roughly handled."

For these reasons, the supposition that it was John Mark appears to me not to be utterly baseless. There is no hypothesis in favour of any other supported by equal probabilities. Very well, then. We will assume that he was the man, and use the incident as the groundwork of our discourse. We have some counterparts of him here to-night, and we shall try to find them out and make use of Mark's blunder for their correction, in respect both to hasty following and hasty running away.

Here is *hasty following.* John Mark does not wait to robe himself, but just as he is, he dashes out for the defence of his Lord. Without a moment's thought, taking no sort of consideration, down he goes into the cold night air to try and deliver his Master. Fervent zeal waited not for chary prudence. There was some-

thing good and something bad in this, something to admire as well as something to censure.

Beloved, it is a good and right thing for us to follow Christ, and to follow him at once; and it is a brave thing to follow him when his other disciples forsake him and flee. It is a bold and worthy courage to take deadly odds for Christ, and to rush, one against a thousand, for the honour of his dear hallowed name. Would that all professors of religion had the intrepidity of Mark! Would that all who have been careless about religion might emulate his haste, and be as precipitate in flying to Christ by faith as he was in running to the rescue in that hour of assault! The most of men are too slow; fast enough in the world, but, ah! how slow in the things of God! I protest that, if corporations and companies were half as dilatory about worldly things as the Church of God is about spiritual things, instead of a railway accident every three or four months, we should have one every hour; and instead of a revolution every one or two centuries, it would be well if we did not have one every year, for of all indolent things the Church of God is the most sluggish. Of all people that dilly-dally in this world, I think professed servants of God are the most drony and faddling. How slothful are the ungodly, too, in divine things; tell them they are sick, they hasten to a surgeon; tell them that their title-deeds are about to be attacked, and they will defend them with legal power; but tell them, in God's name, that their soul is in danger, and they think it matters so little, and is of so small import, that they will wait on, and wait on, and wait on, and doubtless continue to wait on till they find themselves lost for ever.

Let me stir up those who have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to look diligently to their eternal state. You have tarried long enough. The time that you have been out of Christ is surely long enough for the lusts of the flesh. What fruit have you gathered in your impenitence and sin? How much have you bettered by neglecting Christ and minding worldly things? Has it not been all a dreary toil? It may have been decked out with a few transient pleasures, but, putting the ungodly life into the scale, what does it come to? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Do you not confess this? Why, then, tarry any longer? Have you got any happiness in being an enemy to God? Why not be reconciled? Oh that the Spirit of God would make you see that the time past may suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh! Besides, how little time you have to spare, and, if you have much, Jesus demands of you to repent now. "The Holy Ghost saith, To-day, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." The gospel invitation is not for to-morrow, but for to-day. The warnings of the gospel all bid you shun procrastination. Is not this Satan's great net in which men, like the silly fishes of the deep, are taken to their eternal destruction? O thou dove pursued by the hawk, wait not, but fly at once to the dove-cot—to the wounds of Jesus, and be sheltered! Jesus calls thee. Come to him while he calleth thee. Why wilt thou tarry? His cause wants you. Young men, there are some of you who will spend the best of your days in Satan's cause, and when we get you, as we hope we shall, we shall have to baptise into Christ your shrivelled age, your palsied

weakness. Let it not be so. In these days of error, Christ needs for his kingdom men strong and vigorous, who are strong, as John saith, and have overcome the wicked one. Fain I would enlist you, and would turn recruiting-sergeant for my Master. Oh that you were on his side now! You cannot be too hasty here. If now the weapons of your rebellion are thrown down, if now you "kiss the rod, ere he is angry," you will have waited already too long; you will not, nor can you, come too soon. Hark! hark! I hear the chariot wheels of death. He comes! he comes! and the axles of his chariot are hot with speed. He stands aloft driving his white horse. The skeleton rider brandishes his awful spear, and you are the victim. God has spared you up till now, but he may not bid you spend another Sabbath-day. I hear the mower's scythe everywhere, as I pass along, making ready to cut down the grass and the flower thereof. Ah! death's scythe is being sharpened now. He proceeds to reap his harvest every day, and, whether prepared or not, you must be cut down when God's time shall come. Fly, then, I pray you, and though you be, like John Mark, unfit and unprepared, remember you may come naked to Christ, for he can clothe you; you may come filthy to Christ, for he can wash you; you may come all unholy and defiled to Jesus, for he can put away your sin. Come! The Spirit of God seems to-night to say, "Come." I pray that he may bid you come and lay hold upon eternal life. I do not know how it is—I sometimes feel for many of my hearers, especially for those of you whose faces I have seen for these years, an awful earnestness when I am not in this pulpit, and I think

then if I could get your ear I would labour with you. Bethink you how many have been buried. How often do I stand at the grave's mouth, till sometimes, when, week after week, and twice each week, I stand there, I fancy myself but yet talking to dying men, and not to living men at all, talking to a company of shadows that come and go before me, and I stand still, myself a shadow, soon to flit like the rest. Oh that I could talk to you as I then feel, and pour out my soul to you! We want a Baxter to bring men to immediate decision—Baxter with weeping eyes and burning heart—Baxter, who says, "I will go down on my knees to entreat you to think upon eternal things;" Baxter who cries and groans for men till they cry and groan for themselves. Why will ye die? why will ye let procrastination kill you? Wherefore will ye put off till your day is over? Why will ye still waste the candle which is so short? Why will ye let the day go when the sun dips already beneath the horizon? By the shortness of time, by the sureness of death, by the certainty of eternal judgment, I do beseech you fly to Jesus, and fly to Jesus now, though even it should be in the hurry of John Mark.

I change my note. There is a haste that we must reprove. The precipitate running of Mark suggests an admonition that should put you on your guard. He came on a sudden by his religion, and there are some people who do this who might as well have no religion. That, however, was not the case with Mark. He was a genuine character, yet with nine out of ten of these people I am afraid it is far otherwise. Let me address some here who have all of a sudden come to Christ. I do not want to throw doubts in their way as to their

sincerity, but I do want to incite them to examine themselves. I am afraid some people make a hasty profession through the persuasion of friends. You walk with your friend, and he says, "I have joined the church? why don't you do so?" He is not wise enough to put to you pointed questions which would let him see whether you are converted or not, but he unwisely presses you to make a profession when there is no grace in your heart. I pray you as soon as ever you know Christ, speak out for him, and go out and show your colours; but I also beseech you never profess to follow Christ through the persuasion of friends. I trust no pious mother would ever recommend you to do so. I am sure no wise father would ever urge it upon you. They would bid you fly to Christ at once, but as to making the profession, they would have you see whether, indeed, the root of the matter be in you, and when they are persuaded, and you are persuaded of it, they will throw no stumbling blocks in your way. Young people, I pray you don't be deceived in this matter. How many have we seen in the revival times who have been induced to come forward to the "penitent stool," as it is called. That night, oh how much they felt, because their natural sensibilities were wrought upon; but the next morning, oh how little have they felt! When the agencies that stimulated them have been withdrawn, and when the meetings that stirred the embers, and the preacher that fanned the flame no longer exert any transient spell on them, their disenchanted souls sink down into a profound stupor. In many churches there are so few making profession of religion that there is not much danger; but here, where

we receive so many every week, there is need for wise discrimination. I do beseech you never to sit down with a religion that comes to you merely through your being talked to by your acquaintances.

> "True religion's more than notion:
> Something must be known and felt:"

Nor are there a mere few who get their religion through excitement. This furnishes another example of injudicious haste. They hear religion painted as being very beautiful; they see the beauty of it; they admire it; they think what a lovely thing it must be to be a Christian. Feeling this, and misled by a sort of excitement in their minds, they conclude that this is repentance. A false confidence they write down as faith! They eagerly infer that they are the children of God, whereas, alas! they are but the dupes of their own emotion, and still "heirs of wrath, even as others." Beware, I pray you, of a religion which lives upon excitement. We ought to be filled with enthusiasm. A fervent love should make our hearts always glow. The zeal of God's house should be our master-passion. Men never do much in politics till they grow warm upon a question; and in religion the very highest degree of excitement is not only pardonable, but praiseworthy. What, then, is it, which we deprecate? Not the emotions of spiritual life, but an exclusive dependence upon impulse. If you try to live upon the spell of a man's words, upon the imposing grandeur of a multitude assembled together, upon the fascination of congregational singing, or even upon the heart-thrilling fervour of prayer-meetings, you will find the lack of substantial food, and the danger of an intoxicated brain. As the

quails which the children of Israel did eat in the wilderness, God's bounties may be fed upon to your injury. No, dear friends, there must be the real work of the Holy Ghost in the soul, or else the repentance we get will be a repentance which needs to be repented of. I well know a town where there was a certain eminent revivalist, whom I greatly respect. It was said that half the population were converted under him; but I do not think that if the numbers were told at the present moment there would be found a dozen of his converts. This revival work, where it is real and good, is God's best blessing, but where it is flimsy and unreal, it is Satan's worst curse. Revivalists are often like the locusts. Before them it may not be quite an Eden, but certainly behind them it is a desert when the excitement is over. I like rather to see the Word so preached that men are brought under its power by the force of the truth itself, and not by excitement—by the truth of God being laid down in so clear a manner as to enlighten the judgment, rather than by perpetual appeals to the passions, which ultimately wear out the sinews of mental vigour, and make men more dull in religion than they were before. Beware, I pray you, of getting the mere religion of poetry, enthusiasm, and rhapsody. Many profess Christ and think to follow him without counting the cost. They fancy it is all sweet, forgetting that the way is rough, and that there are many foes. They set out like Mr. Pliable, for the Celestial City; but they stumble into the first bog, and they say if they can but get out on the side nearest to their own house, Christian may have the brave country all to himself for them. Oh! the many we have seen at divers times that did

seem to run well, but they ran in the strength of the flesh, and in the mists of ignorance. They had never sought God's strength; they had never been emptied of their own works and their own conceits; consequently, in their best estate they were vanity; they were like the snail that melts as it crawls, and not like the snow-flake upon the Alps, which gathers strength in its descent, till it becomes a ponderous avalanche. God make you not meteors or shooting stars, but stars fixed in their places. I want you to resemble, not the ignis fatuus of the morass, but the steady beacon of the rock. There is a phosphorescence that creeps over the summer sea, but who is ever lighted by it to the port of peace? and there is a phosphorescence which comes over some men's minds. Very bright it seems, but it is of no value; it brings no man to heaven. Be as hasty as John Mark, if it be a sound haste; but take care that it be not a spasm of excitement—a mere fit. Otherwise, when the fit is over, you will go back to your old haunts and your old habits with shame. You will be like Saul among the prophets one day, and hating the prophet king the next. So much, so earnestly would I warn you against hasty followings of Christ.

It remains for me to notice the hasty running away. I do not know that the persons who are readiest to run away are always those who were the fastest to speed their profession. I am inclined to think not. But some who do run well at first have hardly breath enough to keep the pace up, and so turn aside for a little comfortable ease, and do not get into the road again. Such are not genuine Christians; they are only men-made, self-made Christians; and these self-made

Christians never hold on, and never can hold on, because time wears them out, and they turn back to their former state.

There are two kinds of desertion which we denounce as hasty running away: the one temporary, the other final. To the members of the church let me speak upon the former. My dear brethren and sisters, especially you that are young in years and have lately been added to our number, I pray you watch against temporary runnings away from the truth of Christ. Think what a fool Mark made of himself. Here he comes; here is your hero. What wonders he is going to do! Here is a Samson for you. Perhaps he will slay his thousand men. But, no; he runs away before he strikes a single blow. He has not even courage enough to be taken prisoner, and to be dragged away with Christ to the judgment-seat, and bear a patient witness there; but he turns tail at once, and away he flies. How simple he looked! How everybody in the crowd must have laughed at the venturesome coward—at the dastardly bravo! And what a fool will you seem if, after uniting yourself with the church, and seeming to be a servant of God, you shall give way under temptation. Some young man in the same shop laughs at you—"Aha, aha, you are baptised, I hear"; and you tremble, like Peter, under the questioning of the little maid; or your master sees something wrong, and he makes some rough remark to you, "Well, this is a fine thing for a Christian soldier!" Cannot you face the enemy for the first time? "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land

of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" A religion that cannot stand a little laughter must be a very rotten one. We know some people whose religion is on so unsound a basis, their profession so hollow, and their position so shaky, that they make all sorts of noises about our touching them. Their system is of human construction, and rotten, and they know it, therefore are they angry if we do but allude to it. Were it sound and good, then whatever we could say would never frighten them. But, sirs, how many who have made a fair show in the flesh have been personally and individually tried and found wanting! "Mene, mene, tekel" has been written on the wall concerning them. Their first setting out was hasty, and they have been turned aside through a little laughter. Do you not see, dear friends, that this will always render you very untrustworthy? If you shrink in this way, the church will never trust you. I hope you will be a leader in God's Israel one day, young man. We are looking to you, if not to be a preacher, yet to be a church officer one day; but who will ever ask you to do anything when you cannot keep steadfast and hold your own position? He who has not grace enough to prevent his running away in the time of tribulation is not at all likely to be made a leader of God's host. The church will retain you as it retained Mark, but it will always look upon you with a sort of suspicion. We shall always say, "Where is So-and-so? We know where he was yesterday; where is he to-day?" Therefore abstain from these inconsistencies for your own character's sake. Besides, how much damage you do the church! All

the persecutors and infidels outside the church's walls can never harm us so much as inconsistent people inside. "Ah! there is one of the people who go to the meeting," they say, when they see a man in the pot-house who sits at the communion table, "Ah! there is one of your religious people! He can cheat as well as anybody else. He knows how to thumb the yard measure. He knows how to give short weight. He knows how to promise on a certain day, and then run through the Bankruptcy Court according to the law of England, which is that nobody need pay his debts;" and a glorious honest law it is. "Ah!" it is said, "the servants of Christ are not a bit better than other people. They make a great fuss about their purity, but see what they will do." And then see what harm this will do to Christ's church itself. How many who love God will sit down and weep when they see such inconsistencies. Good captains can stand a wound, they will even bear defeat, but they cannot bear to see cowardice on the part of their troops; they cannot bear to see the men running away. If "the men of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle," then their leader weeps, for the glorious cross of Christ is dishonoured, the escutcheon is sullied, and the banner is trailed in the mud. The Lord so keep us that our garments may be always white, that though before God we may have many sins to confess, we may stand like Job, and say, "Lord, thou knowest that I am not wicked." May your testimony be so clear towards the religion of Christ that those who watch you for your halting, and hate you with a perfect hatred, may nevertheless find nothing against you, but may be constrained

to say, "These are servants of God, and serve him in deed and of a truth." I would urge you not to flee or to flinch. Some of us have had enough of lying and slander to bear in our time, and are we a whit the worse? Nay, and if we had the choice to bear it again, would we not do so? We may have had to be laughed at and caricatured, but it breaks no bone, and should not make a brave man wince. Who ought to be alarmed when the war cry is "the Lord of Hosts," and when the banner of God's own truth waves over his head? Courage, my brethren, and you shall have the victory. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Christ ye shall have peace." Value above all things the Holy Spirit. Realise your entire dependence upon him. Pray for fresh grace. Venture not into the world without a fresh store of his hallowed influence. Live in the Divine love. Seek to be filled with that blessed Spirit; and then, my brethren, if the armed man take hold of you, you will not flee away; shame shall not overtake you, dismay shall not affright your souls, but ye shall stand in unblemished integrity to the end as the true servants of Jesus Christ.

And now, in concluding, what am I to say of a final apostasy? None of God's people ever pursue their wanderings to this terrible issue. No vessel of mercy was ever cast away. No elect souls can run this fatal length of wickedness. But there are many in the Church who draw back to perdition. Many who profess Christ are branches bearing no fruit, and are cut off and cast into the fire. Such may be the condition of some here present. Such may be the lot of some of you who "have a name to live, and are dead." Let me

plead with you. Oh, what a dreadful thing it will be if you apostatise at all! Shall I live to see you go back into the world? I would sooner bury you. Shall I live to see some of you who have professed to know the Lord under our ministry at last sinning with a high hand and an outstretched arm, worse than you were before? God spare us this evil thing! Let him chastise his servant in any way he thinks fit, but, O Lord, let not this be the rod—to see professors become false. Remember, if you do apostatise, you have accumulated guilt by the profession you made, and impressed your character with a more uneradicable defilement. When the unclean spirit went out of the man, and afterwards returned, he brought seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in, and dwelt there, and the last state of that man was worse than the first. Better for you never to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn aside to those crooked paths. Think what must be the dying bed of an apostate. Did you ever read of "The Groans of Spira"? That was a book circulated about the time of the Reformation—a book so terrible that even a man of iron could scarcely read it. Spira knew the gospel, but yet went back to the Church of Rome. His conscience woke on his dying bed, and his cries and shrieks were too terrible to be endured by his nurses; and as to his language, it was despair written out at full length in capital letters. My eminent predecessor, Mr. Benjamin Keach, published a like narrative of the death of John Child, who became a minister of the gospel, but afterwards went back to the church from which he had seceded, and died in the most frightful

despair. May God deliver you from the death-bed of any man who has lived a professed Christian, and dies an apostate from the faith! But what must be the apostate's doom when his naked soul goes before God? How must he hear that voice, "Depart, ye cursed; thou hast rejected me, and I reject thee; thou hast played the harlot, and departed from me; I also have divorced thee for ever, and will not have mercy upon thee." What will be this wretch's shame at the last great day, when before assembled multitudes the apostate shall be unmasked? I think I see the profane and sinners who never professed religion lifting themselves up from their beds of fire to point at him. "There he is," says one; "will he preach the gospel in hell?" "There he is," says another; "he rebuked me for cursing, and was a hypocrite himself." "Aha!" says another, "here comes a psalm-singing Methodist—one that was always at his meeting; he is the man who boasted of his being sure of everlasting life; and here he is." No greater eagerness will ever be seen among Satanic tormentors than in that day when devils drag the hypocrite's soul and the apostate's spirit down to perdition. Bunyan pictures this with massive but awful grandeur of poetry when he speaks of the back way to hell. The devils were binding a man with nine cords, and were taking him from the road to heaven, in which he had professed to walk, and thrust him through the back door of hell. Mind that back way to hell, professors! You professors of religion who have been in the church for years, "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith." Examine yourselves whether you be deceived. Look well to your state, see whether you

be in Christ or not. It is the easiest thing in the world to give a lenient verdict when oneself is to be tried; but oh, be just and true here. Be just to all, but be rigorous to yourself. Remember, if it be not a rock on which you build, the house will fall, and great will be the fall of it. Oh, may the Lord give you sincerity, constancy, and firmness; and in no day, however evil, may you be tempted to turn aside; rather may you hold fast by God and by his truth—by Christ and by his word, come what may.

My soul longeth, however many years God may spare me, to walk in and out among you, and find you as earnest for God and as loving towards Christ as you are this day. I glory in you among all the churches. God has given you the spirit of faith and prayer, of earnest zeal, and a sound mind. Unto him be the glory. But, as a church, do not backslide. Let not our fervour diminish, let not our zeal die out. Let us love one another more tenderly than ever; let us cling fast to one another; let us not be divided, "let no root of bitterness springing up trouble us"; firm and steadfast, shoulder to shoulder, like a phalanx of old, let us stand and repel the foe, and win the kingdom for Christ our Lord! "Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding joy, be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

To the Recreant of our Ranks.

"Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." —Isaiah lii. 2.

SHALL not attempt now to decipher the history of the prophecy with which these words are associated. To the Hebrew nation they were big with counsel, and bright with hope. Apart, however, from the connection in which it stands, this verse supplies a pointed practical address of sterling value not to be limited by any private interpretation. Such a charge was well fitted for Israel of old; such counsel would be suitable to any church in a low condition; such advice is equally adapted to any Christian who has fallen into a low state, who is grovelling in the dust, or among the ashes of Sodom. He is bidden to rise from the ground, and sit down upon a throne, for Christ hath made him a king and a priest. He is admonished to unbind all the cords that are upon him, that he may be free and happy in the Lord. To those of you, then, who have sunk into this distressing plight, my text contains a vigorous appeal. Let me try to interpret it.

First of all, I notice the obvious fact. There are

some of God's true people who are in a very sad condition.

This is an important consideration to us just now. If just on the eve of battle a commander should discover that an epidemic has broken out among his troops, he will be extremely anxious that any available remedy shall be tried; for if the soldiers be sick, how can they be expected to behave well on the morrow? So it will sometimes happen that when we mean to serve our Master most, we are impeded in church action by the prevalence of some spiritual disease among the members of the church. Perhaps I may be the means of finding out the sick ones, and indicating their symptoms, and—who can tell?—perhaps this very night, ere you come to the Table, the blessed remedy may be applied, and at the Lord's Supper, while you are feasting with Christ, your souls may become perfectly restored.

Sometimes the children of God fall into a grievous state as to their faith, and their assurance of their own interest in Christ. They doubt whether they are Christians at all; whether their experience is genuine; whether they ever did really repent with a truly broken heart; whether they have received the precious faith, the faith of God's elect. At such times they question all their graces, and they are not able to get a satisfactory answer from one. It is quite possible these people of God may be so walking in outward consistency that everybody else thinks well of them. No one has any suspicion of them; but they suspect themselves grievously, and are tormented with the fear that they have a name to live, and are dead. I have known at such times that there will come at the back of all this

some terrible doubts about the substantial verities of our faith. "What," say you, "doubts about the Godhead, doubts about the Saviour, doubts about the world to come?" Ah, yes! the true people of God are assailed with them. They will hate these doubts, and, in their hearts, they will still believe all the great fundamental and cardinal truths; but yet will they be sore put to it, and be frequently distressed. Thoughtful minds, and men of reading, will have philosophical doubts buzzing about them like mosquitoes on a summer's day. Others who are ignorant of philosophy, and perhaps it is well that they are, will be troubled with doubts of a rougher, coarser quality. Although they will not permit them so to dwell in their hearts, that they actually become unbelievers, yet they will be sore distressed with questions which they cannot answer, with enigmas which they know not how to solve, and with strange intertwistings of difficulty which they know not how to untie. Perhaps, too, at such a time as this there will be over all, and worse than all, a state of dreadful indifference creeping over them. They want to feel, but cannot feel. They would fain wring tears of blood out of their eyes, but not an ordinary tear will drop. They want to be cut to pieces, they would welcome the most poignant sorrow, but they can only say—

> "If ought is felt 'tis only pain
> To feel I cannot feel."

In such cases true believers are sure to resort to the extraordinary use of the means of grace. I mean they will add to their ordinary use something more. Have you never been in such a state that the Bible has

become uninteresting, or the only passages of Scripture that seemed to strike you were dreadful threatenings concerning your own coming doom, as you thought; not a word of comfort, not a syllable that made glad your spirit? You have resorted to prayer, and the heavens have seemed to be brass, and, worse still, your own heart seemed to be brass too, and you could not stir it up to anything like an intensity of desire. You did not wonder that you got no answer. You would have wondered if such a prayer as yours could be heard at all. Ah! and then you have gone up to the assembly of God's people, where, at other times, your heart has danced within you with holy joy. The minister was not changed; perhaps at first you thought he was; but on more attentive hearing you noticed that there was the same truth, and spoken in the same honest fashion; but you could not hear it as you once did. Clouds without rain, and wells without water, all the ordinances seemed to be to you, and all the while, though you felt that you could not live like this, and said—

> "Dear Lord, and shall I ever live
> At this poor dying rate?"

Yet somehow or other you could not get out of it. You felt like one manacled, as though a nightmare were upon you. You were distressed. You could not stir to break the spell. Your spirit cried out as best it could, "O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the worst of it was that you did not feel that you were wretched enough, and you did not seem to cry enough. You were afraid you would sink into a terrible lethargy, which would forerun a spiritual death.

Well, my dear friends, I should not wonder but you brought this very much upon yourselves. If you are in this state, I would exhort you to question yourselves whether this is not the result of what you have often been warned of. Perhaps you restrained prayer; perhaps in your happier days you grieved the Holy Spirit just when you were most joyful and happy in his love. It may be that you grew worldly, or, perhaps, a long succession of little things, none of which you noticed at the time, have contributed to swell the stream of your present distress. At any rate, whatever may be the cause of this state, I grieve that you are in it—grieve for my own sake, for your sake, for the sake of this church, and for the sake of the world around you; for, my brethren, your testimony is, to a great extent, silenced, and your strength to bear it enervated. That face of yours, once so happy, was a living advertisement of the gospel. Your cheerful temperament under trial was an invitation to sinners to come and find a like joy. But now you are distressed, and you go mourning without the light of the sun. What can you do while you abide in such a state as that? You are like the bruised reed, out of which no music can come, or like the smoking flax that yields no light, but only a dolorous and nauseous smoke. I am grieved that it should be so, because were you now to attempt a verbal testimony for Christ, it would be feeble, and could not produce any great result. I remember when I began to teach in the Sunday-school, and I was very young in grace then, having said to the class of boys whom I was teaching that Jesus Christ saved all those who believed in him. One of the boys asked me the question, "Teacher, do

you believe in him?" I replied, "Yes, I hope I do." And he enquired again, "But are you not sure?" I had to look to myself to know what answer I should give. The lad was not content with my repeating, "I hope so." He would have it, "If you have believed in Christ you are saved." And I felt at that time that I could not teach effectually until I could say positively, "I know that it is so. I must be able to speak of what I had tasted and handled of the good Word of Life." So, brethren, you will find that you only perplex those whom you fain would persuade if by your doubts you provoke them to say, "How can you expect us to believe at your mouth what you hesitate to seal with the witness of your own heart?" Unless the joy of the Lord is your strength, your soul will breathe a heavy atmosphere, and your utterance will be checked, if it is not choked by your misgivings. It is your confidence in Christ, and the peace it brings you, that helps you to speak to others as a true witness, because you are an experimental witness of the power of true religion. Your verbal testimony, I say, is weakened—I fear to a very great extent—by the fog and vapour of your scruples, the scruples of a conscience that droops and flags. It is sad to think that while you are looking to your own soul, in doubt whether you are saved or not, you have but little energy to spare in caring for the souls of others. Indeed, it is your first concern to see that you yourselves be saved. Till that all-important matter is resolved, your zeal for your neighbour's welfare is ill-timed. Why busy yourselves to keep other men's vineyards, while your own is left to be overgrown with weeds? And then, my dear friends, another melancholy aspect of this disability is, that all

this while you are a detriment to your fellow Christians. It is hard enough to fight with Satan; but it is all the harder work for the army to have to carry so many sick folk with it, for it involves much more toil. You, whose faith is all but gone, are like the baggage of an army; you hinder the rapid march of the brave soldiers of the Cross. How you depress others that are round about you! Once your voice was that of a brave hero, and you inspirited the troops; but now you pine, and cry, and make others hang their harps upon the willows, and learn the same doleful tune as your own. It is a sad thing. I do not condemn you, but I greatly pity you, and I also greatly pity the Church of God, and the cause of God that it loses so much by you who ought in gratitude to Christ, to do so much for him. Alas, that the people of God should be sunk into so mournful a condition! Much reason is there surely why the exhortation should be pressed in all earnest. Hear it, oh, ailing Christian! "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

I charge you, my brother, content not thyself any longer with the state into which you have fallen. May the Holy Spirit come to you, and prompt you to strike. Do strive to get out of this condition into one of happiness and strength. Let me try to encourage you a little, and may God enable you to the utmost.

Remember, my dear friend—suppose I am now talking to you alone—I almost wish I could grip your hand and look you close in the face—remember from whence you have fallen. Think of the peaceful hours you once

enjoyed. Oh! thy stony heart was not always so cold; the Word of God was not always so dry; the sanctuary was not always so unprofitable. You have wrestled and prevailed, you know you have. You have pleaded with God, and you have had the desire of your heart. You have communed with Christ, and your soul has been like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Can you bear to think of this, and not cry—

> "Return, O Holy Dove, return,
> Sweet messenger of rest!"?

Can you who once have known these things, and had the flavour of them in your mouth, refrain from hungering and thirsting after them again? Think of them, and perhaps, while you are musing upon the past, you may be helped by strong desires to return like Abraham unto the place of the altar, unto that place hard by Bethel, where at the first he had built an altar unto the Lord.

Think of the danger you are in at present. Who are they that are most likely to fall into open sin? Are they not those who walk at a distance from Christ? If you live in close communion with Jesus, you shall have such share of your Shepherd's company that, though you may hear the wolf's howl, you shall not be likely to feel his fang. I believe that when any professor falls into a filthy sin it is not the inception, but the culmination of a process and growth in iniquity. The open sin comes at the heels of a long succession of neglected prayers, of neglected worship of God in the family, negligence of communion with Christ, and negligence of every good thing. It is the fruit, not the seed of the evil which poisons the air and excites the

public odium. Beware, then, O professor!—thou who hast lost the light of God's countenance—beware, beware! I pray thee, of that ill condition of soul which is the prolific parent of all distempers.

Remember, too, that there is real cause for apprehension, *lest you never were safe.* It is just possible that those doubts you feel are no insinuations of Satan, but the suggestions of an enlightened conscience, or even the whispers of the Holy Spirit. Unless you are indeed a Christian, unless you now prove yourself to be such by your return to God, you will, in all probability, become the willing servitor of the devil. Unless you now, with full purpose of heart, seek to Christ, perhaps the time has come when you will turn aside, like Balaam, for reward, or perish in the gainsaying of Korah. In some of those shapes in which wicked men have perished, you may despondingly or presumptuously rush on to destruction, and precipitate your final doom. Beware again, I say, O cold professor!—in God's name, beware of trifling when you have so much reason to tremble.

My dear friend, I would put another thought into your mind which may help you. Perhaps you may think it is rather hampering than helping you, and tends more to depress than to deliver you. Remember *how justly you might now be left to your own devices.* You became carnally secure; you sinned against the light of God's countenance; you grieved his Spirit. What if he were now to say, "He is given unto idols; let him alone?" What if from this day the Spirit should no more strive with you? What if, after all, though you have talked and preached to others, you

yourself should be a castaway? I do but mention this to arouse you, my brother, if you are insensible. You know how sometimes the surgeon fears lest a man should sleep himself to death; and he will even drive pins into him, or make him walk, and drag him about the chamber, so as to arouse him. I would say anything, however sharp, if I might but wake you out of your lethargy. I know you would welcome it, and in due time thank me for the severity of the operation.

But I shall refrain, for methinks there is a better way than this. I want you to arise and shake yourself from the dust, my poor desponding friend; because if the worst be the case, and you be no Christian, no true believer, yet, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as snow." What if it has been all a mistake, and you never ought to have made a profession; yet Jesus Christ receiveth sinners: come to him now. I always find this the short way out of a long dreary road, a quick relief for acute maladies, a ready antidote for doubts and fears. The devil has been arguing with Christians for so many years, that he understands the case against them a great deal better than any of us do; and if we begin to controvert with him, we shall soon find that that old hater of man will soon get the mastery over us. But if we say, "I give it in, Satan, I give it in; I am a sinner, the chief of sinners; hast thou anything more to say? I give it all in; but I answer thee with this—'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin; I believe in him, and my sins are therefore washed away,'"—this is the high

road to perfect comfort. I beg thee, my dear brother, to take it at once. Hear the word of the Spirit, which saith, "Repent, and do thy first works." The very first works were repentance and faith; and so even begin again. Away to the fountain filled with blood! Away to the cross, and give that life-look once more! Away to the finished substitutionary sacrifice, and beneath the crimson canopy of the atonement hide thy guilty head. Oh! if thou doest this, thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thy glory as the noonday. The Lord help thee to do this now, and end the strife!

Let me also remind any Christian here full of doubt, and with the bands of his neck tight upon him, *that the atoning blood has not changed its power to cleanse.* If it cleansed you twenty years ago, it can cleanse you still. Remember, Jesus has not lost his power to save, nor has he changed his character for willingness to save to the uttermost.

> "Jesus sits on Zion's hill,
> He receives poor sinners still."

Come, then, to the unchanging Saviour. Thou who hast been treacherous—thou whose heart has played the harlot to Christ—come back; for his love to thee has not waned. "Return unto me, O backsliding daughter, saith the Lord; for I am married unto thee." The prodigal's heart may change towards his Father, but his Father's heart never changes towards him. Return, then, for mercy waits thee, and not judgment. He is God, and not man, else thou hadst been consumed long ago. Return now, for he will put away thy sin like a cloud, and thy transgressions like a thick cloud. Duly acknowledge thy wandering, humble thy-

self because of thy treachery, and say, "My Father, thou shalt be the guide of my youth," so shalt thou be restored perfectly, and thy former joy shall come back to thee.

Do I hear thee say, "But I am not fit to come back to Christ, and have joy in him at once." Oh, sir! wert thou fit at first? No; and thou art not fit now, but come and welcome. Christ wants nought from thee. Come and trust him, and perfect salvation is thine. "Oh! but I cannot bear to look him in the face, for I have lived so long without walking in his counsel." So much the more reason that thou shouldest not live another hour without him. I charge thee, my poor distressed brother—I charge thee, my troubled sister—by the love that Christ hath to thee, come to him now. Behold he stands at the door and knocks; if thou wilt open to him, though the house be not furnished, nor the table covered with a festival for him as it should be, yet will he come in and sup with thee, even with thee, and thou shalt sup with him to-night. I see no reason why the most desponding Christian here should not rejoice before he comes to the Table of the Lord. I do not know why the most barren among us should not be made fruitful. This I do know, that we are not straitened in him; we are not straitened in his willingness to bless, nor in his ability to comfort. Oh! believe him, Christian; believe him. If thou be not a Christian, cast thyself at his feet. He will not let thee perish. Lay hold, if it be but of the skirts of his garment, and do not let him go. Do thou even now shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments.

A momentous obligation will henceforth rest upon

you. I must close with this remark. I know there are many of God's people in the state I have been describing. I have the pain sometimes of trying to cheer them. I only hope that what I have said may be blessed of God to them. I fully anticipate it. Here, then, is the practical point. When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.

Look out for those who are in the same state as you have been in, and be very tender over them. As you know their case, and have traversed that howling desert, you will be able to direct them. I have described your case, because I fear that I have sometimes been on the verge of it myself. I have found recovery by a fresh resort to the love of Christ, and a simple renewal of my trust in him. I can, therefore, enter into your feelings, and ask you to try the same remedy. After you have found the remedy to be a good one, it is but a small return, and certainly it is due from you, to tell others how you have been restored.

Some of you, beloved, have never been thus carried into captivity. I pray God you never may be. There is no necessity for it; but let me entreat you to walk very tenderly with your God. We serve a jealous God. He will wink at many an act of insubordination done by his enemies; the one tithe of which, if done by his favourite ones, his elect, his darlings, would cause him to hide his face from them at once. "You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Saith he not, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten"? A sinner may go on wantonly unrebuked; he may add house to house, and field to field, and he may think himself secure;

God will deal with him in the next world. But the heir of heaven is under a discipline of divine love, and God will deal with him in this world; and among the chastisements of departure from Christ will be the loss of comfort, the loss of power to do good, and I know not what other affliction added thereunto in his soul or in his circumstances. Dear brother, walk carefully, then; while you have light, walk in the light. Oh! prize the sweet love of Christ; never, never let it go. Say unto your soul, when Christ is in your heart, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor wake my love until he please. Introduce no rival's love, and no worldliness; fall into no inconsistencies, but pray for grace that with holy jealousy you may still dwell in the light and find favour in his eyes.

And being thus kept near to God, and being strong in the power of his might, *come and give back the strength to him from whom you derived it.* Stand up for Christ. I believe we are never happier than when we have plenty to do. Idleness is the mother of vexation. A Christian who does but little for Christ, unless he is prevented from doing it by suffering, will, as a rule, be a miserable man. You active Christians, active in body and nimble in spirit,—you joyous Christians, who walk in the light of God's countenance,—"work while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work." Let us pledge each other that we will now seek the good of Zion. Members of this church, let none of you be recreant to the loyalty which you owe to Christ in this the hour when we seek to press forward as one man in the battle of our Great Captain and Lord. I would stand side-

by-side with you to take my share; but what can one do if he abide alone? My brethren in office will not be backward, I know; but what can we do? Keep step with us, my brethren, in pleading for souls, in proclaiming the gospel, in seeking to win the many to the knowledge of the Saviour; and the Lord will bless us, even our own God will bless us. Shaking ourselves from the dust, and breaking off the bands of our own sloth, God will come with his crown of benediction, and place it on his church's head; and when we get that coveted prize, let us hold it fast, that no man take it from us. Let us go forward as a church in indissoluble union, and in unwearied service, until he shall come whose "Well done!" shall be our best reward.

Good Conversation.

"Talk ye of all his wondrous works."—1 Chronicles xvi. 9.

THIS sentence stands in connection with exhortations to offer thanksgiving unto the Lord and to make known his deeds among the people. Thus it runs, "Sing unto him; sing psalms unto him; talk ye of all his wondrous works."

The old typical religion of the Jews, and the perverse superstition of the heathen, made some places sacred and other places unclean; some actions holy, and other actions, performed however well they might be, common, and not to be connected in any degree with holiness. But the religion of Jesus Christ has once for all swept away all distinction of holy places. Every place is hallowed where man is holy. Jesus Christ has consecrated the world by his presence. Now wherever man chooses to worship there is a house for God. The place must be right, if the purpose be good. The religion of Jesus Christ has also swept away those distinctions which men make as to actions being necessarily religious or irreligious. Some will have it that to sing a psalm is to worship God—a sacred thing, but to

feed the sparrows is according to them a secular matter. To come up to a place that shall be set apart for worship, and there to bow the knee in prayer, is adoration of the Most High, but, according to them, to perform acts of mercy and righteousness is not a tribute of homage to God. Now, the very essence of the Christian religion is just this—that it is not a thing confined to hours and times, to places and edifices, but it is a thing of spirit. It lieth not in outward garbs or in specious words, but it pervades the whole spirit of man, and makes him turn his entire life into worship; then every action that he performs in its spirit and under its influence, is holiness unto the Lord. God is worshipped by servants who fulfil the duties of their station, by judges who decree righteousness, by merchants who deal justly, by children who obey their parents, and by parents who train up their children in the fear of the Lord, provided always that they do it in faith, without which nothing is pleasing to God. There is not a material line to be drawn anywhere, so that you can say, "Outside of that you go beyond the sanctuary of religion, and get into the outer courts frequented by the multitude." This has been the great mistake which some Christians have made with regard to politics. They have supposed that a Christian could not be a Politician. Hence much injustice has been done to leading minds and noble characters. The fact is when a man feels that there is nothing belongs to man but what may be consecrated to God, and when he says, "I, being God's servant, may take all that belongs to man, and devote it as holiness unto the Lord," he reaches the highest order of manhood, and illustrates

the highest style of Christianity. We cannot fully exhibit the spirit of Jesus Christ till we have learned that we must carry out in every place and in every sphere the spirit of his religion.

I make these remarks because, while we are first bidden to sing unto God's praise, we are next told to talk about his wondrous works. There is a praising for the assembly; there is a talking for the fireside; and both are to be holy. The praise is to be hearty, sincere, unanimous, full of animation; the talk is to be equally sincere, equally earnest, equally sacred. You are not to say "I have done with praising God" when the hymn is over, and you begin to open your mouths upon ordinary topics; but throughout your ordinary conversation, in the fields, by the wayside, in the streets, and in your chambers, you are still to go on praising God, and talking of all his wondrous works.

Shall there be a connection established then between such a common word as "talk," and such grand swelling words as "the wondrous works of God"? We wonder to find the little monosyllable in such a place. "Preach ye of all his wondrous works," would seem well enough; "Show them," would seem sound theology; but *talk* ye, talk ye; in your ordinary, common, every-day conversation, make the wondrous works of God to be your trite converse, your familiar talk. We must talk; we we seem born to talk; we were wretched indeed if we were forbidden to speak to our fellow-creatures. Why, the world seems to be enlivened by continuous, not to say incessant talking, from the first blush of morning, on still through all the bustling day, and far into the shades of drowsy night. How our tongues are occupied! They

run more quickly than our feet, and carry less, though much mischief sometimes comes from their babble. They are sharper than razors some of them, and cut deeper than swords, and kindle fire enough to set the world in a blaze. Now, this talking to which women are proverbially disposed, and in which men indulge as freely as inclination prompts them; such talking to be heard in every street, in every house, and in every workshop; this it is which is to be consecrated unto God. The streams of conversation are everywhere to be drawn off from the gutters and channels in which they gather defilement; to be strained, cleansed, and purified, till they become fresh, clear, and sparkling. Then the speech of human intercourse, man with man, saint with saint, being redeemed from the beggarly elements of common slander and envy, foolishness and vanity, shall be lifted up as on eagles' wings, till it is like the fellowship of the angels; realising the prediction of the psalmist, in its tribute to the praise of the Lord, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power."

I. Now, first, THE SUBJECT HERE SUGGESTED FOR OUR COMMON-PLACE TALK—HIS WONDROUS WORKS—invites notice.

Brethren, we ought to talk more about God's wondrous works *as we find them in Holy Scripture.* Do you read them? Alas! in how many a case the Bible is the least-read book in the house! I am inclined to think that though there may be more Bibles in England than any other book, there is less of Bible-reading than anything else in literature. The sacred volume seems to be scarcely known to many, except from chapters

read in the public services, and the quotations of the minister; while alas, alas for us! our conversation has very little in it of the records of the mighty acts of the Lord. But the old saints were wont to speak to one another about the historical parts of Scripture. They dwelt full often, and never seemed happier than when they were dwelling upon it, on that story of the Red Sea, when the Lord smote Rahab, and brake the head of the dragon. How they would stand together and speak of the books of the wars of the Lord, of what he did by the brook Arnon, and how he led his servants through Jordan, and brought them into the promised land, cast out the Canaanites, and slew their kings. They talked of these things, not merely as historical events, but as seeing the Lord in them all, and they so spoke and so read of them as to see in them subjects worthy of their study. I do not know how it is, but we do not get at the history of our own country in anything like the way in which one might desire, for really the wondrous works of God which he has done here in this land are such as we ought to speak of at our firesides. We should look upon the events of history, and the chronicles of each day in this light; and if, as we scanned the ample page of history, rich with the spoils of time, we saw God's hand fashioning its contingencies and moulding them into destiny, and the impress of his footsteps upon all its stupendous revolutions, we should not lack for topics of conversation, but our memories would be stored, our interest excited, our minds elevated with noble passions, and our social intercourse ennobled by the inexhaustible resources of wisdom, as we talked of all the wondrous works of the Lord.

But, brethren, OUR OWN INDIVIDUAL HISTORY will enable us to relate such a multitude of tender mercies as may well become incentives to gratitude and praise. How much might we tell of what the Lord has done for us personally! Here is a subject that shall never be exhausted. Talk to one another, especially to those who can understand you because they have felt the same, of the longsuffering of God when you were in your ungodly state; the wonders of that love which tracked you with its many warnings while you were still strangers to yourselves and to God. Talk of that Almighty power which, when the predestinated hour had come, laid hold upon you and made you yield. Speak of what the Lord did for you when you were in the low dungeon of your self-abhorrence; how he met with you when you were brought to death's door; how Jesus appeared for you, and clothed you with his righteousness, and your spirit revived, and your heart was glad. Shall the slave ever forget the music of his chains when they dropped from his wrists, and will you ever cease to speak of that happy day, the happiest of all days, when all the chains of your transgression were for ever broken off at the love-touch of your Redeemer? Oh no! talk ye still of the wondrous works of God as connected with your conversion. And, since that time, however quiet your life may have been, I am sure there has been much in it that has tenderly illustrated the Lord's providence, the Lord's guidance, the Lord's deliverance, the Lord's upholding and sustaining you. You have been, perhaps, in poverty, and just when the barrel of meal was empty then were you supplied. Talk ye of his wondrous works. You have been in

great temptation, and when you were reeling under it, or when you were slandered, and no name was thought bad enough for you, his sweet love hath appeared to you, and helped you to rejoice in this also for Christ's name sake. Talk ye of this. You have gone, perhaps, Christian, through fire and through water; yours has been a very chequered life; you have fought with lions or have stood in the valley of the shadow of death, but in it all God's aid has been very wonderful. There have been miracles heaped upon miracles along your pathway. Perhaps you are like the Welsh woman, who said that the Ebenezers which she had set up at the places where God had helped her were so thick that they made a wall from the very spot she began with Christ to that she had then reached. Is it so with you? Then talk ye, talk ye of all his wondrous works. I am sure you would find such talk most interesting, most impressive, and most instructive, for the things we have seen and experienced ourselves generally wear a novelty, and abound in interest beyond any narrative we get from books, or any unauthenticated story we pick up at second-hand. Tell, then, how God has led you, fed you, and brought you to this day, and would not let you go.

There is a topic for you, and you never shall know how large it is.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS SUBJECT IS BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE.

Were we to talk more of God's wondrous works there would be this negative good, that *we should talk less about our own works.* A man never lowers himself more than when he tries to lift himself up. There are

some whose propensity is to use vain swelling words about their own doings, and they seem to be never better pleased than when they are bragging and saying, "*I* did this; *I* did that; *I* did the other." "Talk ye of all *his* wondrous works." As for your puny actions, if you judge and estimate them properly, you will find more to mourn over than to boast of. Give to the Lord the glory that is due unto his name, and your discretion shall not be perilled.

If we talked more of God's wondrous works we *should be free from talking of other people's works.* It is easy to criticise those we could not rival, and carp at those we could not emulate. He who could not carve a statue, or make a single stroke of the chisel correctly, affects to point out where the handicraft of the greatest sculptor might have been improved. It is a poor pitiful occupation, that of picking holes in other people's coats, and yet some people seem so pleased when they can perceive a fault, that they roll it under their tongue as a sweet morsel. Why should this be? Why should you find fault with God's servants in this way? They are not your servants, but his servants; he will call them to account himself. He does not ask you to be thus officious. Talk ye of his wondrous works, and you will not speak so unkindly of his servants.

Did we talk more of God's wondrous works *it would keep us from the ordinary frivolities of conversation.* In the olden times they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. Suppose for a moment that our ordinary conversation

were taken down by an eaves-dropper, as in the case mentioned by Malachi. I do not know what your conversation was about at tea-time this evening, but supposing that somebody had been hearkening and hearing, and that you knew for certain that it was going to be put into a book and printed, would you feel quite easy? Supposing we could have put down in a book the talk of all our people during the day, and could have it all read out, I am afraid we should find that our talk is not always such as edifieth, and not always seasoned with salt. In fact, some Christian people never talk thoroughly good Gospel talk unless somebody is present in whose esteem it is likely to raise them, or until they get into such company as they suppose will relish it, and then they feel compelled to accommodate themselves to the occasion. The habit of thoroughly good godly talk is not common among professors. I wish it were. I wish that not only sometimes our talk were what God would have it to be, but that it were always so, that our common conversation were like salt ministering grace unto the hearers.

As there is a negative excellence about this subject of conversation, so there is also a positive excellence. Supposing we were to talk more of God's wondrous works; when the habit was acquired, *it would necessitate stricter habits of observation, and of discrimination in watching the providence of God.* Memory, the treasure house of the mind, must have its goods assorted and its records indexed, so that the things of which we hear and read might not only be well retained, but easily referred to. As Cowper says—

> "But conversation, choose what theme we may,
> And chiefly when religion leads the way,
> Should flow, like waters after summer showers,
> Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers,"

Alas! the mercies of God flow by us like a river; we forget to count its multitudinous waves. We receive the mercies fresh every day, and take but slight account of them; too often they are

> "Forgotten in unthankfulness,
> And without praises die."

The spirit of observing God in all things was prevalent amongst our Puritan ancestors. They saw God in every single drop of rain, and in every ray of sunlight. They were wont to talk about the commonest changes of the atmosphere as coming from the hand of God, to speak of incidents which we might account trivial, as connected with the decrees of him who ordereth all things after the counsel of his own will. Oh, that we too amidst the various mazes of life could thus learn to track the course "of boundless wisdom and of boundless love!" Such conversation, brethren, *would be very ennobling.* Why, it would liken us to the ancient saints and the spirits before the throne. What is their conversation there? How they talk of God's wondrous works, God's works in creation, God's works in providence, God's works in grace. They are too taken up with the splendour of the Divine presence to suffer their pure intercourse to degenerate into any meaner theme. Yes, and living as we do in the presence of God, professing to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and to have been lifted up from the world into communion with Jesus Christ, it ought to be our holy ambition

to let our conversation be of things that are like our standing, things that are worthy of our high calling and profession, things that have to do with our election, and will help us onward to our eternal portion. We should not be so grovelling as we are did we talk more of the wondrous things of God.

And beloved, while holding this lofty fellowship of heart and tongue, *how would our gratitude glow, and what an impulse would be given to our entire life!* I do not know how you find it, but with me it is no easy matter to maintain spiritual life in the fulness of its vigour. To go week after week, month after month, and year after year, plodding on in the pilgrimage, is hard work; it needs no small degree of strength, resolve, and skill. If it were one tremendous leap we could soon perform it; if it were but a spurt in the race we might soon win the prize; but to go on, on, on, and still to keep up our zeal, still to be awake, still to be earnest, here it is one feels the need of the mercies of God to be a means of grace to us, to refresh our gratitude, and put fresh fuel upon the altar. Oh! brethren, we have not lived yet. We do not seem to recognise what the Christian life really means. When I instanced our conversation just now as being poor and mean, and barren, I did but cull one mildewed leaf out of the whole field, for our whole life is much alike, I fear. The Lord revive us. What means is he so likely to use, except he employ the rod of chastisement, as the renewal of our memory of his great loving-kindness, that we may be constrained to dedicate ourselves more fully unto him?

III. But time flies; let me proceed therefore to URGE

THIS TALKING, ORDINARILY AND COMMONLY, ABOUT GOD'S WONDROUS WORKS.

I have already said that it would prevent much evil and do us much good; may I not safely add that *it would be the means of doing much good to others.* If we spake often of God's wondrous works we might impress the sinner, we might enlighten the ignorant, we might comfort the desponding. You say, "But how are we do it?" I reply, "How is it you have not done it before?" If we began early in our Christian course to make Jesus Christ our companion in the family, and everywhere wherever we went, and to take him always with us, we should never leave off; it would become the business of our life. I have noticed that many Christian people delay in this matter for years. They cultivate habits of retirement and reticence more upon this subject than upon any other. Perhaps it is a long time after they have believed that they come forward to obey the second great command of baptism, and the same shyness happens with regard to their talking about Christ in all companies. They do love him; at least we trust they do in the judgment of charity; we acknowledge them, but having never began at the first to acknowledge him openly they cannot break the ice now. If they had then had the courage to say—"I have given Christ my tongue, and mean to use it for him; I am his servant, and I mean to serve him wherever I go," they would have continued the profession and the practice still. Brethren, Is it diffidence that restrains you? Take care it is diffidence, and not cowardice; say to yourselves, each one of you—

"Am I a soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause,
Or blush to speak his name."

What, in the presence of the noble army of martyrs who feared not to die, do you fear to speak? What, if they stood on the burning faggots for Christ, cannot you bear, if so it must be, a jeer or a sarcasm? Must you be wickedly dumb when you might do so much for Christ in the circle where his providence has cast you? Oh! be ashamed of having been ashamed. Do ask the Master that, whatever fear you have, you may be delivered from the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. "Talk ye of all his wondrous works."

But some will object, "I have not gifts or ability." Nay, my brother; my sister; it does not want any ability to talk, or else there would not be so much loquacity in the world as there is. Talk in the ordinary strain, the common-place prattle which breaks the silence of the world;—it is what everybody is at. There is no gifted tongue requisite, there are no powers of eloquence invoked; neither laws of rhetoric or rules of grammar are pronounced indispensable in the simple talk that my text inculcates—"*Talk* ye of all his wondrous works." I beg your pardon when you say you cannot do this. You cannot, because you will not. If you would you could speak well of his name. Because there is no want of ability in any one of us to say something for Jesus after an ordinary sort, I press it upon you.

Are you a nursemaid? Talk of his name to the little prattlers with whom you are intrusted. Or are you a

crossing-sweeper? Friend, there are some you can get at that I could not. I will be bound to say the crossing-sweeper has a friend who would be frightened if I were to speak to him. "But I am so poor," you reply; "I work in the midst of such a ribald, blaspheming set." Ah! friend, but you can talk; I know you can; there are times when you can talk even to these blasphemers. It is little use talking to a drunken man; it is like casting pearls before swine. But he is not always drunk; there is a time of sobriety, and then it is that you are to go to work. You are not so to talk of Christ as to stop the mill, or to interpose your religion in the way of business. That were indiscreet; but there are leisure times, there are hours for dinner, there are times when they talk to you, and then is your time to talk to them. As the profane take the liberty to force their irreligion upon you, so may you take the liberty to force your religion upon them. Use your wits, find out the proper times, and then turn them to the best account. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that."

I have only one aim; if I can succeed in it I shall be very thankful—that Christian people shall talk more of the love of God at the table, at the breakfast table, at the tea table, at the dinner table; that domestic companionship and social hospitalities may be hallowed, and this without depriving them of their genial conviviality; rather infusing into them a higher entertainment; that we who are masters shall talk of the things of God, so that our servants shall hear of them, and that servants shall so speak of Christ that their

fellows shall hear about him. The great weapon of the Christian religion has been the public preaching of the Word, nor would I disparage it, but it will never evangelise the nations unless there be attendant with it a constant reiteration of the truth preached, till it flows through innumerable little conduits into every circle of society. Wycliffe was but one man, but he taught others to read. One page of Matthew's Gospel and the Epistle to the Romans was given to each. They went out and read it in the streets. So was the truth spread until it was said that you could not meet two men on the roadside but one of them would be a Lollard. In Luther's day it was not merely the preaching of Luther, it was the singing of the hymns and the psalms at the spinning-wheel; it was the occupation of the solitary colporteur; it was the general chit-chatting with everybody, at the smithy fire, in the farm-yard, on the Exchange; curiosity was excited, inquiry was prompted, the popular conversation was inoculated; the fever of that healthful sickness, repentance toward God, was spread abroad, and communicated from one to another. "Have you heard the news? Have you heard that Luther has proclaimed that men are justified by faith, and not by works?" It was this that shook Rome; it is this which will shake her yet again. The waking up of Christian life throughout the entire body of the Church of God, and the enlisting of the entire life of the Christian Church in the cause of Christ, is an enterprise to be consummated by the individual agency of each and the general action of all who seek the glory of God and the welfare of man. Talk ye, therefore, of all his wondrous works.

Oh! that there should be any here who never thought of God, much less talked of his wondrous works. Wondrous indeed is God's patience that he has kept you alive! Marvellous his longsuffering that after having neglected him all these years he has not cut you down! The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but you have not known God. You would not keep a dog that would not follow you. You would soon dispose of an ox that was of no service to you. Oh! why has God kept you? It is a wonder. Here is another wonder, he bids us entreat you, allure you, encourage you with a saving promise—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Take heed to this gospel. May the Holy Ghost make you yield to it. Trust Christ; obey him by avowing your faith in him, and you shall be saved.

Dumb Singers.

"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."—Isaiah xxxv. 6.

WHAT a difference grace makes whenever it enters the heart! We find here the blind, but they are not blind in one sense; grace has touched their eyes, and the eyes of the blind are opened. Men are said to be deaf; but they are not deaf after grace has operated upon them: the ears of the deaf are unstopped. They have been lame before; but when once the Omnipotent influence has come upon them, they leap like a hart. And the dumb, so far from being dumb, have a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising. The tongue of the dumb not simply speaks, but it sings. Grace makes a great difference in a man when it enters into him. How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who assert themselves to be the children of God, and yet live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct; they are just what they used to be before their pretended conversion; they are not changed in their acts, even in the least degree, and

yet they do most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God. Let such know that their professions are lies, that falsehood is the only groundwork that they have for their hopes; for, wherever the grace of God is, it makes a difference. A graceless man is not like a gracious man; and a gracious man is not like a graceless one; we are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." When God looks upon us with the eye of love, in conversion and regeneration, he makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness—as heaven itself is from hell. God works in man a change so great that no reformation can even so much as thoroughly imitate it. It is an entire change—a change of the will, of the being, of the desires, of the hates, of the dislikings, and of the likings. In every respect the man becomes new when divine grace enters into his heart. And yet thou sayest of thyself, "I am converted," and remainest what thou wast! I tell thee once again to thy face, thou sayest an empty thing; thou hast no ground for saying it. If grace permits thee to sin as thou wast wont to do, then that grace is no grace at all. That grace were not worth the having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before. No, we must ever hold fast to the great doctrine of sanctification. Where God really justifies he really sanctifies too; and where there is a remission of sin, there is also the forsaking of it. Where God hath blotted out transgression, he also removeth the love of it, and maketh us seek after holiness, and walk in the ways of the Lord. We think we might fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations we have to make concerning it.

And now we shall want you, first of all, to notice the sort of people God has chosen to sing his praises, and to sing them eternally. Then, in the second place, I shall enter into a more full description of the dumb people here described. Then shall I try to notice certain special times and seasons when those dumb people sing more sweetly than at others.

I. First, then, "The tongue of the dumb shall sing." We make this the first point.

Note the persons whom God has chosen to sing his songs for ever. There is no difference, by nature, between the elect and others; those who are now glorified in heaven, and walk the golden streets clad with robes of purity, were by nature as unholy and defiled, and as far from original righteousness, as those who, by their own rejection of Christ, and by their love of sin, have brought themselves into the pit of eternal torment, as a punishment for their crimes. The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in heaven and those who are in hell, rests with divine grace. It is of divine grace alone. Those in heaven must inevitably have been cast away had not everlasting mercy stretched out its hand and redeemed them. They were by nature not one whit superior to others. They would as certainly have rejected Christ, and have trodden under foot the blood of Jesus as did those that were cast away, if grace, free grace, had not prevented them from committing this sin. The reason why they are Christians is not because they did naturally will to be so, nor because they did by nature desire to know Christ, or to be found of him: but they are now saints simply because Christ made them so. He gave them

the desire to be saved; he put into them the will to seek after God: he helped them in their seekings, and afterwards brought them to feel the peace of God, which is the fruit of justification. But, by nature, they were just the same as others; and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference lies on the wrong side of the question. In very many cases, we who now "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," were the worst of men.

There are some here that now bless God for their redemption, who once cursed him; who implored, as frequently as they dared to do, with oaths and swearing, that the curse of God might rest upon their fellows and upon themselves. Many of the Lord's anointed were once the very castaways of Satan; the sweepings of society; the refuse of the earth; those whom no man cared for. They were called outcasts, whom God hath now called desired ones, seeing he hath loved them. I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told here that those who sing were dumb. Their singing does not come naturally from themselves; they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones, these whom God would have to sing his praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of the blasphemer, or the tongue of the slanderer, but the tongue of the dumb, of those who have gone farthest from any thought of singing; of those who have no power or will to sing: the tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God's praises. Strange choice that God has made; strange, for its graciousness; strangely manifesting the sovereignty of his will! God would build for himself a palace in heaven of living

stones. Where did he get them? Did he go to the quarries of Paros? Hath he brought forth the richest and the purest marble from the quarries of perfection? No, ye saints, look to "the hole of the pit whence ye were digged," and to the quarry whence ye were hewn! Ye were full of sin; so far from being stones that were white with purity, ye were black with defilement, to all appearance utterly unfit to be made stones in the spiritual temple, which should be the dwelling-place of the Most High. And yet he chose you to be trophies of his grace and of his power to save. When Solomon built for himself a palace, he built it of cedar; but when God would build for himself a dwelling for ever, he cut not down the goodly cedars, but he dwelt in a bush, and hath preserved it as his memorial for ever, "The God that dwelt in the bush." Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material; they fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold; God maketh his precious things out of base material; and from the black pebbles of the defiling brooks he hath taken up stones, which he hath set in the golden ring of his immutable love, to make them gems to sparkle on his finger for ever. He hath not selected the best, but, apparently, the worst of men to be the monuments of his grace; and when he would have a choir in heaven that should with tongues harmonious sing his praises—when he would have a chorus that should for ever chant the hallelujahs louder than the noise of many waters, and like great thunders, he did not send mercy down to seek earth's songsters and cull from us those who have the sweetest voices; he said, "Go, Mercy, and find out the dumb, and touch their lips, and make them sing."

The virgin tongues that never sang my praise before, that have been silent erst till now, shall break forth in rhapsodies sublime, and they shall lead the song; even angels shall but attend behind, and catch the notes from the lips of those who once were dumb. The tongue of the dumb shall sing his praises hereafter in strains of purity hitherto unknown.

Oh! what a fountain of consolation this opens for you and for me! Ay, beloved, if God did not choose the base things of this world, he would never have chosen us; if he had respect unto the countenance of men, if God were a respecter of persons, where had you and I been this day? We had never been instances of his love and mercy. No, as we look upon ourselves now, and remember what we once were, we are often obliged to say:—

> "Depths of mercy, can there be
> Mercy still reserved for me?"

How many times we have sung at the Lord's table—the sacramental supper of our Master:—

> "Why was I made to hear thy voice,
> And enter while there's room,
> While others make a wretched choice,
> And rather starve than come?"

And we have joined in singing:—

> "'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
> That sweetly forced us in;
> Else we had still refused to taste,
> And perished in our sin."

Grace is always grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. You are obliged to confess that it is of grace then, and cast

away the thoughts that it was of your foreseen faith, or of your foreseen good works, that the Lord chose you. We are obliged to come to this. We feel and know that it must have been of mercy, free mercy, sweet mercy alone. We were not capable of doing good works without his grace preventing us before good works, and without his grace also in good works enabling us to do them; and therefore they never could have been the motive to divine love, nor the reason why it flowed towards us. O ye unworthy ones! ye saints that feel your deep natural depravity, and mourn over your ruin by the fall of Adam, lift up your hearts to God! He hath delivered you from all impediments which Adam cast upon you; your tongue is loosed, it is loose now; Adam made it dumb, but God hath loosed it; your eyes that were blinded by Adam's fall are opened now; he hath lifted you from the miry clay. What Adam lost for us Christ hath regained for us; he hath plucked us out of the pit, and "set us upon a rock, and established our goings, and hath put a new song in our mouth, even praise for evermore." Yes, "the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

Just another hint here before I leave this point. How this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others! Why, my brethren, I can never think any man too far gone for divine mercy since I know that God saved me. Whenever I have felt despondding about any of my hearers who have for a long time persevered in guilt, I have only had to reach down my own biography from the shelves of my memory, and just think what I too was till grace redeemed me, and brought me to my Saviour's feet; and then I have

said, "It will be no wonder if that man is saved; after what he hath done for me I can believe anything of my Master. If he hath blotted out my transgressions, if he hath clean melted away my sin, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures. I may despair for myself, but I cannot for them." Remember, they may be dumb now, but he can make them sing. Your son John is a sad reprobate; keep on praying for him, mother; God can change his heart. Your daughter's heart seems hard as adamant; he who makes the dumb sing can make rocks melt. Believe in God for your children as well as for yourselves—trust him; take their cases before the throne; rely upon him that he can do it, and believe that in answer to earnest prayer he also will do it. And if you have neighbours that are full of the pestilence of sin, whose vices come up before you as a stench in your nostrils, yet fear not to carry the gospel to them; though they be harlots, drunkards, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Saviour's dying love. He makes the dumb sing; he does not ask even a voice of them to begin with; they are dumb, and he does not ask of them even the power of speech, but he gives them the power. Oh if you have neighbours who are profaners of the Sabbath, haters of God, unwilling to come to the house of God, despising Christ; if you find them as far gone as you can find them, recollect he maketh the dumb sing, and therefore he can make them live. He wants no goodness in them to begin with; all he wants is just the rough, raw material—unhewn, uncut, unpolished. And he does not want even good material; bad as the material may be, he can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of

the Saviour's blood. Go on—fear not; if the dumb can sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be a castaway.

II. Now I am to enter into some rather more lucid description of these dumb people. Who are they?

Well, sometimes I get a good thought out of Cruden's Concordance. I believe that it is about the best commentary on the Bible for ordinary uses, and I like to study it. As I opened it at this passage, I found Master Cruden describing different kinds of dumb people. He says there are four or five different sorts, but I shall name only four of them. The first sort of dumb people he mentions are those that cannot speak; the second sort are those that will not speak; the third sort are those that dare not speak; and the fourth sort are those that have nothing to say, and therefore are dumb.

The first sort of people who shall sing are those who cannot speak—that is the usual acceptation of the word *dumb*—the others are, of course, only figurative applications of the term. We call a man dumb when through physical infirmity he cannot speak. Now, spiritually, the man who is still in his trespasses and sins is dumb, and I will prove that. He is dead, and there is none so dumb as a dead man. "Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction?" The word of God assures us that men are spiritually dead: it follows then that they must be spiritually dumb. They cannot sing God's praises; they know him not, and therefore they cannot exalt his glorious name. They cannot confess their sins. Though they may utter

the mere words of confession, they cannot really confess, for they do not know the evil of sin, nor have they been taught to feel what a bitter thing it is, nor do they know themselves as sinners. And as "no man can call Jesus Lord, except by the Holy Ghost," these people cannot do so truly. Perhaps, it may be, they can talk well of the doctrines, but they cannot converse about them out of the fulness of their hearts, as living and vital principles which they know by any kind of spiritual instinct or experience. They cannot join in the songs, nor can they take part in the conversation of a Christian. If they sit down with the saints, perhaps they have culled a few phrases from the garden of the Lord, which they use and apply to certain things which they do not know anything about. They talk a language the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton's daughters reading a language to their father which they did not understand. So far as the essence of the matter is concerned, they are dumb. But, all hail sovereign grace! "The tongue of the dumb shall sing." God will have his darlings made what they should be. They are dumb by nature, but he will not leave them so; they cannot now sing his praises, but they shall do it; they will not now confess their sins, but he will bring them on their knees yet, and make them pour out their hearts before him. They cannot now talk the brogue of Canaan, or speak the language of Zion, but they shall do it soon. Grace, omnipotent grace, will have its way with them. They shall be taught to pray; their eyes shall be made to flow with tears of penitence; and then, after that, their lips shall be made to sing to the praise of sovereign grace.

I need not dwell upon this point, because I address many here that were dumb once, who can bless God that they can now sing. And does it not sometimes seem to you, beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be the strangest thing in the world for a dumb man to speak, because he has no idea how a man feels when he is speaking—he has no notion of the thing at all. Like a man blind from his birth, he has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. We have heard of a blind man who supposed that the colour of scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet—he had no other way of comparing it. So the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk. Do you not think that it is a strange thing that you are what you are? You said once, "I will never be one of those canting Methodists. Do you think I shall ever make a profession of religion? What! I attend a prayer-meeting? No." And ye went along the streets in all your gaiety of mirth, and said, "What! I become a little child, and give up my mind to simple faith, and not reason at all! What! am I to give up all argument about things that pertain to the life to come, and simply take them for granted because God has said them? Nay, that never can be!" I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you as long as you are here on earth that you are the children of God; and even in heaven itself the greatest wonder to your mind will be, that you were brought to know and taught to love the Saviour ere you saw the goodly land or walked the golden streets.

But there is a sort of dumb people that will not speak. They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said of preachers in

his day, they were "dumb dogs that would not bark." Bless God, we are not now quite so much inundated by this kind of dumb folk as we used to be. We have had to mourn, in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish and find nobody but a dumb dog in the parish church, and in the pulpits of dissenters there was full often a painful lack of positive gospel. Full many who might have spoken with a little earnestness let the people slumber under them, instead of preaching the word with true fidelity, as those who would have to give account to God. My grandfather used to tell a story of a person who once resided near him, and called himself a preacher of the gospel. He was visited by a poor woman, who asked him what was the meaning of the "new birth?" To which he replied, "My good woman, what do you come to me about that for? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, did not know; he was a wise man, and how do you think I should?" So she had to go away with only that answer. Time was when such an answer might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorised teachers of religion, but knew nothing at all about the matter. They understood a great deal more about foxhunting than about preaching, and more about farming their land than about the spiritual husbandry of God's church. Bless God, there are not so many of that sort now; God grant the race may become thoroughly extinct. Oh that every pulpit and every place of worship might be filled with a man who has got a tongue of fire and a heart of flame, and shuns not to declare the whole council of God, neither seeking the smile of men, nor dreading their frown. We have this promise that it

shall be so—"The tongue of the dumb shall sing." And, ah! they do sing well, too, when God makes them sing. You remember Rowland Hill's story in "The Village Dialogues," about Mr. Merriman. Mr. Merriman was a sad scapegrace of a preacher; he was to be always seen at fair and revel, but seldom to be found in his pulpit when he should have been there, until he was converted, and then he began to preach with tears running down his face, and it was not long before the church began to be crowded! The squire would not go and hear any of that stuff, and locked up his pew; and Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break the door open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other, so that it made twice as much room as there was before. No preachers are more thoroughly pronounced than those who were once dumb. If the Lord opens their mouths they will think they cannot preach often enough and earnestly enough to make up for wasted time and the mischief they did before. Chalmers himself might never have been so eloquent a preacher had he not been for a long time a dumb dog. He preached morality, he said, till he made all his parish immoral; he kept on urging the people to keep God's law, till he made them break it; but when he turned round and began to preach God's gospel, then the dumb began to sing. Oh, may God bring this about in every one of us! If we are dumb as professed ministers, may he open our mouths, and force us to speak forth his word, lest at the last day the blood of our hearers' souls should be found upon our skirts, and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards of the gospel of Christ.

I will now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are dumb because they dare not speak; and they are good people, blessed souls. Here is one of them: "I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." And it is so blessed to be dumb in that fashion. The Lord's servant will often have to be dumb under trials and troubles. When Satan tempts him to repine, he will put his finger to his lip and say, "Hush murmuring, be still; shall a living man complain of the punishment of his sins?" Even the child of God will imitate or emulate Job when he sat down for seven days and nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was heavy, and his words were light, therefore he could say nothing. It had been as well if Job had kept his mouth shut for the next few days; he would not have said so much amiss as he did in many things that he uttered. Oh! there are times when you and I, beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongue, lest we should murmur against God. We are in evil company, perhaps; our spirits are hot within us, and we want to take vengeance for the Lord; we are like the friends of David, who wanted to give Shimei a taste of summary justice. "Let us take off this dead dog's head," we say: and then our Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard, "the servant of the Lord must not strive." How often have we been dumb. And sometimes when there have been slanders against our character, and men have calumniated us, oh, how our fingers have itched to retort upon them. We have wanted to see who was the stronger of the two. But we have said, "No: our Master did not answer, and he left us an example that

we should follow his steps." The chief priests accused him of many things, but he "answered them not a word." Well, we have found it hard sometimes to be dumb, like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughter-house. Upon our beds in sickness we have tried to quench every murmuring word; we have not let a sentence of repining or an impatient expression escape our lips which we could possibly avoid, but, notwithstanding all our resolution, we have found it no easy matter to restrain ourselves, and to keep silence. It is blessed work when we are enabled to do it. Now, ye who have been dumb under great weights of sorrow; ye whose songs have been suspended, because ye durst not open your lips lest sighs should usurp the place of praise,—come, listen to this promise: "the tongue of the dumb shall sing." You are, it may be, in the deepest trouble now, and obliged to be silent; well, you shall sing yet for all that. Though like Jonah, you are in the whale's belly, carried down, as he called it, to the lowest hell; though the weeds are wrapped about your head, and the earth with her bars is about you for ever, yet you "shall look again towards his holy temple." Though you have hung your harp upon the willows—bless God you have not broken it—you will have use for it by-and-by—you shall take it from its resting-place, and

> "Loud to the praise of sovereign grace
> Bid every string awake,"

If you cannot cheer the darkness with "songs in the night," yet he shall "compass you about with songs of deliverance;" if you cannot sing his praises now, yet ye

shall do so by-and-by, when grace shall fill your hearts, or when delivering mercy shall fire your tongues. Your better days are yet to come. But, blessed be God, we are not always to be silent with affliction. The saints have known joy unspeakably great in the midst of trial intolerably hot. Their murmuring has been silenced, and their thanksgiving has become vocal. An old Puritan said, "God's people are like birds; they sing best in cages." Another observes that "God's people sing sweetest when in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was on earth the higher the ark went up towards heaven." So it is with the child of God if he lives close to his Master. Troubles are called weights. A weight, you know, generally cloggeth and keepeth down to the earth; but there are conditions according to the laws of mechanics, by which you can make a weight lift you; and so it is possible to make your troubles lift you above the world instead of making them sink you beneath your level. Ah! we thank our God, he has sometimes opened our mouth when we were dumb through ingratitude, and did not praise him. He has opened our mouth by a trial; for a thousand mercies we did not bless him, till a sharp affliction has quickened our memory.

We have one more kind of dumb people. There are those who have nothing to say, therefore they are dumb. I will give you an instance; Solomon says in the Proverbs—"Open thy mouth for the dumb;" and he shows by the context that he means those who in the court of judgment have nothing to plead for themselves, and have to stand dumb before the bar. Like that man of old, who, when the king came in to see the

guests, had not on a wedding garment; and when the king said, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" he stood speechless; speechless, not because he could not speak, but because he had nothing to say. Have not you and I been dumb, and are we not now, when we attempt to stand on law terms with God, when we forget that Jesus Christ and his blood and righteousness are our full acquittal? What answer can we give when the commandments are laid bare before us, and the demands of God's law are brought home to our conscience? There was a time with each of us, it was not long ago with some here present, when we stood before Moses' seat and heard the commandments read, and we were asked—"Sinner, canst thou claim to have kept those commandments?" and we were dumb. Then we were asked—"Sinner, canst thou give any atonement for the breach of those commandments?" and we were dumb. We were asked—"Sinner, canst thou, by a future obedience, wipe out thy past sin?" We knew it was impossible, and we were dumb. We were asked—"Canst thou endure the penalty? canst thou bear to swelter for ever in the flames of hell; canst thou suffer everlasting torments; canst thou dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with eternal fires?" and we were dumb. We were asked the question—"Prisoner at the bar, hast thou any reason to plead why thou shouldst not be condemned?" and we were dumb with convictions of our deserts and terror at our doom. And we were asked—"Prisoner, hast thou any helper; hast thou anyone that can deliver thee?" and we were dumb, for we had no wisdom or device, nor did an answer rise to our lips. Ay, but blessed be God, "the tongue of the

dumb shall sing." And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why, we can sing this anthem: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "not God, for he hath justified." "Who is he that condemneth?" not Christ, "He hath died, yea rather, hath risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us." We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now speak fluently, having received knowledge of salvation through the remission of our sins.

Has God made you dumb? has he taken away all your self-righteousness? Then, as truly as ever he has shut your mouth, he will open it. If God has killed your self-righteousness, he will give you a better righteousness. If he has knocked down all your refuges of lies, he will build you up a good refuge. He has not come to destroy you; he has shut your mouth for a season to fill it with his praise hereafter. Be of good cheer: look to Jesus; cast thine eye to the cross; put thy confidence in him: and then thou who thinkest thyself a castaway, even thou, poor weeping Mary, shall yet sing of redeeming mercy and undying love.

IV. To conclude, let me just notice the occasions when the tongue of these dumb people sings the best.

When does the tongue of the dumb sing? Why, I think it sings always, little or much. If it is once set at liberty, it will never leave off singing. Some people say this world is a howling wilderness; well, they make it so. If you choose to distress yourselves and disturb other people, I cannot help it. I shall prefer the matter of my text—"Then shall the tongue of the dumb," not howl, but "sing." Yes, they do sing

always, little or much; sometimes it is in a low hush-note; sometimes they have to go rather deep in the bass, but there are other times when they can mount to the highest notes of all. They have special times of singing. They first begin to sing, when they lose their burden at the foot of the cross; that is a time of singing. You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim lost his burden at the cross, he gave three great leaps; and went on his way singing. We have not forgotten those three great leaps; we have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude, but we think we never leaped so high as we did at the time when we saw our sins all gone, and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Saviour. By the way, let me tell you a little story about John Bunyan's allegory. I am a great lover of John Bunyan, but I do not believe that his teaching is always infallible; for I met with a story the other day which I think a very good one. There was a young man in Edinburgh who wished to be a missionary. He was a sensible young man; he thought —"Well, if I am to be a missionary, there is no need for me to transport myself far away from home; I may as well be a missionary in Edinburgh." There's a hint to some of you ladies who give away tracts in your district, and never give your servant Mary one. Well, this young man started, and determined to speak to the first person he met. He met one of the old fishwives: those of us who have seen them can never forget them; they are extraordinary women indeed. So, stepping up to her, he said, "Here you are, coming with your burden on your back; let me ask

you if you have got another burden, a spiritual burden?" "What!" she said; "do you mean that burden in John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress?' Because if you do, young man, I have got rid of that many years ago, before you were born. But I went a better way to work than the pilgrim did. The evangelist that John Bunyan talks about was one of your parsons that do not preach the gospel; for he said, 'keep that light in thine eye and run to the wicket-gate.' Why man alive! that was not the place for him to run to. He should have said, 'Do you see that cross? Run there at once!' But instead of that, he sent the poor pilgrim to the wicket-gate first; and much good he got by going there!—he got tumbling into the slough, and was like to have been killed by it." "But did you," he asked, "go through any slough of despond?" "Yes, young man, I did; but I found it a great deal easier going through with my burden off than with it on my back." The old woman was quite right. We must not say to the sinner, "Now, sinner, if thou wilt be saved go to the baptismal pool—go to the wicket-gate—go to the church—do this or that." No, the cross should be right in front of the wicket-gate, and we should say to the sinner, "Throw thyself there, and thou art safe. But thou art not safe till thou canst cast off thy burden, and lie at the foot of the cross, and find peace in Jesus." Well, that is a singing time with God's children!

And after that, do God's people sing? Yes, they have sweet singing times in their hours of communion. Oh! the music of that word "communion," when it is heard in the soul, communion with Jesus,

fellowship with Jesus, whether in his sufferings or in his glories! These are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness to Christ, and its vital union with him, and is enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Have you not had some precious singing times, too, at the Lord's table? Ah! when the bread has been broken, and the wine poured out, how often have I had sweet refreshment when the people have all joined in singing—

"Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there the conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember thee?

"When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
Oh! Lamb of God, my sacrifice,
I must remember thee."

But lastly, my dear friends, the best singing time we shall have will be when you and I come to die. Ah! there are some of you that shall prove this as it is fabled of the swan. The ancients said the swan never sang in his life-time, but always sang just when he died. Now, there are many of God's desponding children who seem to go all their life under a cloud, but they get a swan's song before they die. The river of your life comes running down perhaps black and miry with troubles, and when it begins to touch the white foam of the sea, there comes a little glistening in its waters. So, beloved, though we may have been very much dispirited by reason of the burden of the way, when we get to the last, we shall find sweet songs. Are you

afraid of dying? Oh! never be afraid of that; be afraid of living. Living is the only thing that can do you any mischief; dying never can hurt a Christian. Afraid of the grave? It is like the bath of Esther, in which she lay for a time, to purify herself with spices, that she might be fit for her lord. You are afraid of dying, you say, because of the pains of death. Nay, they are the pains of life—of life struggling to continue. Death has no pain; death itself is but one gentle sigh—the fetter is broken, and the spirit fled. The best moment of a Christian's life is his last one, because it is the one that is nearest heaven; and then it is that he begins to strike the key-note of the song which he shall sing to all eternity. Oh! what a song will that be! It is poor music we make now, when we join the song—perhaps we are almost ashamed to sing; but up there our voices shall be clear and good; and there

> "Loudest of the crowd we'll sing,
> While heaven's resounding mansions ring
> With shouts of sovereign grace."

The thought struck me the other day, that the Lord will have in heaven some of these very big sinners that have gone further astray than anybody that ever lived, the most extraordinary extravaganzas of vice, just to make the melody complete by singing some of those soprano notes which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter. I wonder whether one has stepped in hither, whom God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here. Oh! how will such a one sing, if grace—free grace—

shall rescue him, deliver him from going down into the pit, and in redeeming mercy change his heart, renew a right spirit within him, and so completely mould his character anew that he shall become a proof, an evidence, an illustration of the Father's personal love to his soul, of the power of Christ's blood to cleanse, of the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost. Such an one will sing because he must. The spiritual instinct within him will be impatient of all restraints. For such fruits of ministry I labour and strive according to his working which worketh in me mightily. *For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

The new Song and the old Story.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people."—Psalm xcvi. 1—3.

THERE are mighty passions of the human soul which seek vent, and can get no relief until they find it in expression. Grief, acute, but silent, has often destroyed the mind, because it has not been able to weep itself away in tears. The glow of passion, fond of enterprise and full of enthusiasm has often seemed to rend the very fabric of manhood when unable either to attain its end or to utter its strong desires. So it is in true religion. It not only lays hold upon our intellectual nature with appeals to our judgment and our understanding, but at the same time it engages our affections, brings our passions into play, and fires them with a holy zeal, producing a mighty furor; so that when this spell is on a man, and the Spirit of God thoroughly possesses him, he must express his vehement emotions. Some professors of religion are ingenious enough to conceal whatever grace they possess. Little enough they have, I warrant you, or it would soon be discovered. Have you never seen

the brooks that were wont to come down the hill sides filled up with stones through greater part of the summer? You wonder whether there is any streamlet there at all. You may go and search among the rounded stones, and scarcely find a trace of water. How different after the snows have been melted, or the mists upon the mountain's brow have turned to showers. Then the water comes rushing down like a mighty torrent, nor is there any question about its being a genuine stream. It shows itself as it rolls the great stones along, peradventure breaking down the banks, and overflowing the country. So there is a religion—a poor, miserable, ordinary Christianity—which is not worth the name it bears, that can hide itself; but vital godliness must assert itself, it must speak plainly, it must act vigorously, it must appear conspicuously. The cross reveals the hearts of men, it unveils their true character. Till the cross was set up, Joseph of Arimathea was scarcely known to be a disciple, and Nicodemus continued to do habitually what he once did literally—resort to Jesus by night. Openly he remained in the sanhedrim, though secretly he was a profound admirer of the great Redeemer. But when the cross was lifted up, Joseph went boldly in with senatorial authority and obtained the body of Jesus for burial, and Nicodemus came out with well-timed liberality to provide his hundredweight of spices, and his fair white linen. Thus the cross reveals the thoughts of many hearts. If you have real grace and true love to Jesus in your soul, you will want some modes of expressing yourselves. Our purpose therefore now is, to suggest to you two modes of expressing your consecration to

God and your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. These two methods are *to sing about* and *to talk about* the good things the Lord has done for you, and the great things he has made known to you. Let song take the lead—"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name." Then let discourse engage you; be it in public sermons or in private conversations—"Shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people."

We begin with *the voice of melody*. All ye that love the Lord, give vent to your heart's emotion by song, and take care that it be sung to the Lord alone. The human voice, what a noble instrument it is! what a compass it has! its low soft whispers, how they can hold us spell-bound; its full volume as it peals forth like thunder, how it can startle and produce dismay. What profanity, then, to use such an instrument in the service of sin! Is not our tongue the glory of our frame? Had I no conscientious objection to instrumental music in worship, I should still, I think, be compelled to admit that all the instruments that were ever devised by men, however sweetly attuned, are harsh and grating compared with the unparalleled sweetness of the human voice. When it is naturally melodious and skilfully trained (and every true worshipper should be zealous to dedicate his richest talent and his highest acquirement to this sacred service), there can be no music under heaven that can equal the combination of voices which belong to men, women, and children whose hearts really love the Saviour. So sweet, so enchanting the melody of song, surely its best efforts should not

be put forth to celebrate martial victories or national celebrations, much less should it lend its potent charm to aught that is trivial or lascivious. By sacred right its highest beauties should be consecrated to Jehovah. If thou canst sing, sing the songs of Zion. If God has gifted thee with a sweet, liquid voice, be sure and use it to render homage unto him who cried out for thee upon the cross, "It is finished!" "Sing unto the Lord."

How much public singing, even in the house of God, is of no account! How little of it is singing to the Lord! Does not the conscience of full many among you bear witness that you sing a hymn because others are singing it? You go right straight through with it by a kind of mechanical action. You cannot pretend that you are singing to the Lord. He is not in all your thoughts. Have you not been at places of worship where there is a trained choir evidently singing to the congregation? Tunes and tones are alike arranged for popular effect. There is an artistic appeal to human passions. Harmony is attended to; homage is neglected. That is not what God approves of. I recollect a criticism upon a certain minister's prayers. It was reported in the newspaper that he uttered the finest prayer that had ever been offered to a Boston audience. I am afraid there is a good deal of vocal and instrumental music of the same species. It may be the finest praise ever offered to a congregation. Surely that is not what we come together for. If you want the sensual gratification of music's melting, mystic lay, let me commend you to the concert-room, there you will get the enchanting ravishment, but when ye come here let it be

to sing unto the Lord. As ye stand up to sing, there should be a fixed intent of the soul, a positive volition of the mind, an absolute determination of the heart, that all the flame which kindles in thy breast, and all the melody that breaks from thy tongue, and all the sacred swell of grateful song shall be unto the Lord, and unto the Lord alone.

And if you would sing unto the Lord, let me recommend you to flavour your mouth with the gospel doctrines which savour most of grace unmerited and free. Any other form of theology would tempt us more or less to chant the praise of men. Gratitude has full play when we come to know that salvation is of the Lord alone, and that mercy is divinely free. He that hath once heard the echo of that awful thunder, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," will learn to rejoice with trembling, to sing with deep feeling, and to adore with prostrate reverence the great Supreme, to whom might and majesty belong, and from whom grace and goodness flow. Human counsels and conceits sink into insignificance, for thoughts of loving-kindness and deeds of renown belong unto the Lord alone.

Kindly glance your eye down the psalm, and note how the exhortation to sing is repeated three times. Though I lay a stress, I draw no absolute inference from this peculiar construction. To say the least, it is remarkable that the number three is so continually employed. Farther down in the same psalm it is written, "Give unto the Lord," "Give unto the Lord," "Give unto the Lord,"—three times. Is there not here some

kind of allusion to the wondrous doctrine of the Trinity? At any rate I make bold to use the threefold cord to express the homage with which it behoves us to adore the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. As for Unitarianism, it is a religion of units, and I suppose it always will be. There is no danger of its ever spreading very widely. It is cold as a moonlight night, though scarcely as clear. It has not enough of power in it to fire men's hearts to laud and magnify the Lord. It produces now and then a hymn, but it cannot kindle the passions of men to sing it with fervour and devout enthusiasm. Certainly it cannot gather a crowd of joyous people who will make a joyful noise to the Lord, and with all their heart and voice shout the chorus of gratitude. Oh, beloved, I beseech you let your souls have vent in praise.

> "Bless'd be the Father and his love,
> To whose celestial source we owe
> Rivers of endless joy above,
> And rills of comfort here below."

Praise the God of glory who loved you before the foundation of the world. Praise the God of grace who called you when you sought him not. Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, our Heavenly Father who provides for us, educates us, instructs us, leads and guides us, and will bring us by-and-by to the many mansions in his own house.

Sing ye also unto the Son. Never fail to adore the Son of God, who left the royalties of heaven to bear the indignities of earth. Adore the Lamb slain. Kneel

at the cross foot, and praise each wound, and magnify the immortal who became mortal for our sakes.

> "Glory to thee, great Son of God!
> From whose dear wounded body rolls
> A precious stream of vital blood,
> Pardon and life for dying souls."

And, then, sing ye to the Holy Spirit. Let us never fail in praising him. I am afraid we do. We forget him too much in our sermons, our prayers, and our hymns, or we mention him, perhaps, as a matter of course, with formal expressions rather than with spontaneous feelings. Oh, how our hearts are bound reverently to worship the divine indweller who, according to his abundant mercy, hath made our bodies to be his temples wherein he deigns to dwell.

> "We give thee, sacred Spirit, praise,
> Who in our hearts of sin and woe,
> Makes living springs of grace arise,
> And into boundless glory flow."

Praise ye, with your songs, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—the triune God of Israel. Have you understood this? To Jehovah let your song be addressed. Thrice be his holy name repeated. Now then be careful of the instructions; let the song that you sing be a new song—O "sing unto the Lord a *new* song!" not the song of your old legal bondage which you used to sing so tremblingly, with the dread of a slave; a new and nobler song becomes you who are his children, his sons and daughters. "O sing unto the Lord a new song!" To some of you the song of redemption is quite new. Once you sang the songs of

Bacchus or of Venus, or else you hummed over some light air, without meaning or motive, unless to while away your time and drive away all serious thoughts. O you who used so readily to sing the songs of Babylon, sing now the songs of Zion quite as freely and earnestly. Sing unto the Lord a new song.

By a "new" song is meant the best song. It is put for that which is most elegant, most exquisite, and best composed. Pindar says, "Give me old wine, but give me a new song." So may we say, "Give us the old wines of the kingdom of God, but let us sing unto the Lord a new song,"—the best that we can find, no borrowed air, no hackneyed lyric; and let our spirits sing unto the Lord that which wells up afresh out of the quickened heart. A new song—always new! keep up the freshness of your praise. Do not drivel down into dull routine. The drowsy old clerks in the dreary old churches used always to say, "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God such and such a psalm," till I should think the poor old Tate and Brady version was pretty well used up. We have new mercies to celebrate, therefore we must have new songs.

> "Blest be his love who now hath set
> New time upon the score."

With "new time upon the score," let there be new notes for him who renews the face of nature. And have not we, dear brethren and sisters, new graces? Then let us sing with our new faith, and our new love, and our new hope. Some of you have very lately been made new creatures; sing ye unto the Lord a new song, surely he hath done great things whereof ye are glad. Others of you have been

converted for years; yet if your inward man be renewed day by day, your praises shall be always new. Luther used to say that the wounds of Christ seemed to him to bleed to-day as if they had never bled before, for he found such freshness in his Master. You pluck a flower, and it soon loses its scent and begins to wither; but our sweet Lord Jesus has a savour about his name that never departs. We take his name to be like a bundle of camphire all night betwixt our breasts, and in the morning it smells as sweet as when we laid us down to sleep; and when we come to die, that lily of the valley will drop with the same profusion as it did when with our youthful hand we first plucked it and came to him and gave him all our trust. "Sing unto the Lord a new song." Let the freshness of your joy and the fulness of your thanks be perennial as the days of heaven.

This song, according to our text, is designed to be universal. "Sing unto the Lord all the earth." Let sires and sons mingle in its strains. Let not the aged among you say, Our voices are cracked, but sing to the Lord with all the voice you have, and all the compass you can. And you young people, give the Lord the highest notes you are able to reach. Still sing unto the Lord ye that are rich, sing unto the Lord who has saved you, for it is not many that he saves of your sort.

> "Gold and gospel seem to ill agree:
> Religion always sides with poverty,"

said John Bunyan, and he spoke the truth. Sing unto the Lord ye poor ones whom the Lord has favoured, for so does it happen still that "the poor have the

gospel preached unto them." Sing unto him, ye that are learned in many matters. Let your talents make your song more full of understanding And you that are unlearned, if ye cannot put so much of understanding into the song, put more of the spirit, and sing with all the more heartiness. All the earth should sing. There is not one of us but has cause for song, and certainly not one saint but ought especially to praise him. You remember that passage in the hundred and seventh Psalm (it is worth noticing), where the psalmist says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of their enemies," as if surely they, above all others, ought to say, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good."

In addition to its being a new song and a universal one, it is to be a very inspiration of gratitude. "Sing unto the Lord: *bless his name.*" How apt you are in speaking of any one who has been kind to you to say, "God bless him!" The expression comes right up from your heart. And although you cannot invoke any blessing on God, you can desire for his name every blessing and every tribute of homage. You can desire for his cause that it may be established, and may be triumphant. You may desire for his people that they may be helped, made holy, and guided to their eternal rest. You may desire for mankind that they may hallow God's holy name, and all because you feel you owe so much to the Lord that you cannot help praising, and cannot help wishing that your praise should be fruitful on earth and acceptable in heaven.

In three ways, methinks, it becomes us to sing God's

praises. We ought to sing with the voice. I do not consider we sing enough to God. Angel harp and human voice! If the angel harp be more skilful, surely the human voice is more grateful. For my part, I like to hear sacred songs in all sorts of places. The maid-servant can sing at her work, and the carter as he drives his team. The occupations are few which could not be enlivened by repeating the words and running over the tune of a hymn. If it were only in a faint whisper, the habit might be cultivated. You might expose yourselves, it is true, to a taunt, and be upbraided as "a psalm-singing Methodist," but it would not do you much hurt. Better that than make a ribald jest or utter an impious blasphemy. Those who lend their tongues to such vile uses have something to be ashamed of. Lovers of pleasure sing their songs; and poor trash, for the most part, they are. If the snatches we catch in the streets are the echoes of the saloon and the music-hall, little credit is due to those who cater for public amusement. Lacking alike in sense and sentiment, they betray the degeneracy of the times, and the depravity of popular taste. There is a literature of song in which peasants may rejoice, of which patriots may be proud, and to which poets may turn with envious eyes. Why wed your pretty tunes to paltry words? The higher the art, the more the pity to debase it. If you cull over our hymn-books for samples of bad poetry, loose rhyme, and puerile thoughts, that reviewers like to revile, and libertines like to laugh at, we can only say, Well, we cannot always vindicate the culture of those whose sincerity we hold in the highest esteem; but we will dare to confront you on equal

terms—the sanctuary versus the saloon—our vocalists against your vocalists from the sacred oratorios of Handel to the choicest of your operas—from the cant of our revival hymns to the catch of your last sensational songs. Yes, indeed, the people of God should sing more. Were we to try the exercise, we should find no small degree of pleasure in the practice. It would do us good to praise God more day by day. When we get together, two or three of us, we are in the habit of saying "Let us pray." Might not we sometimes say, "Let us sing." We have our regular prayer-meetings, why do not we have praise meetings about as often?

> "Prayer and praise for sins forgiven
> Make up on earth the bliss of heaven."

We are like a bird that has only one wing. There is much prayer, but there is little praise. "Sing unto the Lord. Sing unto the Lord."

To sing with the heart is the very essence of song.

> "In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
> And my heart it doth leap at the sound of his name."

Though the tongue may not be able to express the language of the soul, the heart is glad. Some persons seem never to sing with their heart. Their lips move, but their heart does not beat. In their common daily life they move about as if they had been born on a dark winter's night, and carried the cold chill into all their concerns. The lamentation they constantly utter is this—"All these things are against me." Their experience is comprised in half a sentence—"In the world ye shall have tribulation." They never get into

the harbour. "In me ye shall have peace" is a secret they have never realised. They are fond of calling this world a howling wilderness; and they are utterly oblivious of its orchards and vineyards. Were God to put them in the garden of Eden they would not take any notice of the fruit or the flowers. They would go straight away to the serpent and begin saying, "Ah, there's a snake here." Their harp is hung on the willows, they never can sing. Their heart is unstrung. Sing they cannot.

Well, dear friends, a Christian man ought to be like a horse that has bells on his head, so that he cannot go anywhere without ringing them and making music. His whole life should be a psalm; every step should be in harmony; every thought should constitute a note; every word he utters should be a component part of the joyful strain. It is a blessed thing to see a Christian going about his business like the high priest of old who, wherever he went, made music with the golden bells. Oh, to have a cheerful spirit—not the levity of the thoughtless, nor the gaiety of the foolish, nor even the mirth of the healthy—there is a cheerful spirit which is the gift of grace, that can and does rejoice evermore. Then when troubles come we bear them cheerfully; let fortune smile, we receive it with equanimity; or let losses befall us, we endure them with resignation, being willing, so long as God is glorified, to accept anything at his hands. These are the people to recommend Christianity. Their cheerful conversation attracts others to Christ. As for those people who are morose or morbid, sullen or severe, harsh in their judgment of their fellow men, or rebellious against the

will of God—people of a covetous disposition, a peevish temper, and a quarrelsome character—unto them it is of no use to say, "O sing unto the Lord," for they will never do it. They have not any bells in the tower of their heart; what chimes can they ring? Their harps have lost their strings; how can they magnify the Most High? But genuine piety finds expression in jubilant song; this is the initiative, though it is far from exhausting its resources.

In the second place, then, let me stir you up, especially my dear friends those of you who are members of this church, to such daily conversation and such habitual discourse as shall be fitted to spread the gospel which you love. Our text admonishes you to "show forth his salvation." You believe in the salvation of God—a salvation of grace from first to last. You have seen it; you have received it; you have experienced it. Well, now, show it forth. Explain it to others, and with the explanation let there be an illustration; exemplify it by your lives. God has shone upon you with the light of his countenance, that you may reflect his brightness and irradiate others. Every Christian here is like the moon, which shines with borrowed light. But the sun lends not his bright rays to be hoarded up. It is that they may scatter beams of brightness over this world of night. Take care, then, that you are faithful to your trust. Show forth his salvation. God knows, I try to do so from the pulpit. Would God you could try and do so from the pews. Are you lacking in opportunities? I trow not. Before and after service, especially to strangers and such as may have been induced to come and hear

the gospel, speak a word in season; thoughtfully, prayerfully, softly, talk with them. Show forth this salvation too in your own houses, or on your visits, or wherever your lot may happen in God's providence to be cast. It is wonderful how God blesses little efforts, very little efforts. I have sometimes—I am sorry to say not as often as I ought—scattered seed by the wayside. Only a few nights ago I had been driven by a cabman, and after I had alighted and given him the fare, he took a little Testament out of his pocket, and said, "It is about fifteen years ago since you gave me that, and said a word to me about my soul, and it has stuck by me, and I have not let a day pass since without reading it." I felt glad. I know that if Christian people would try and show forth God's salvation they would often be surprised to find how many hearts would gladly receive it. Beloved, show forth this salvation from day to day. Let it not be merely on a Sunday. While ye hold that day sacred, let no other day be common or unclean. We are thankful for the kindly efforts in the school and elsewhere on our Sabbaths, but we want Christian activity to be put forth from day to day. Let your zeal for the conversion of your fellow creatures be continuous, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." The result of the Sabbath work may, perhaps, not be seen by you, when the result of Monday's work may very speedily appear. Show forth his salvation from day to day. This admonition is enforced in three clauses; so let us notice the second. "Declare his

glory among the heathen." It is the same thing in another form. When you are telling out the gospel, point especially to the glory of it. Show them the justice of the great substitution, and the mercy of it. Show them the wisdom which devised the plan whereby, without a violation of the law, God could yet pardon rebellious sinners. Impress upon those that you talk with that the gospel you have to tell them of is no common-place system of expediency, but really it is a glorious revelation of divinity. You know men are very much attracted by aught of glory and renown. They will even rush to the cannon's mouth for glory. Now, be sure, when you are talking to others about the salvation you have received at the hands of your dear Lord and Master, that you tell them about the glory thereof,—what a glory it brings to Christ, and to what a glory it will bring every sinner by-and-by. Tell them of the glory of being pardoned, the glory of being accepted, the glory of being justified, the glory of being sanctified. Is it not all "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus?" Methinks ye might relate some scenes from the death-beds of the saints ye have known on which rays of glory have fallen; but I am sure ye might anticipate a glory which words cannot picture or imagination realize, in the second advent of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection of the just and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom. Dwell upon these things. Declare his glory. And do not be ashamed in the presence of people of a disreputable character, though their ignorance and degradation be never so palpable. "Declare his glory among the *heathen*." "I am going on a mission to the heathen," said a minister once to his people.

Mistaking his meaning they went home deploring the loss of their pastor. On the following Sunday when they found him in the pulpit they discovered that he had not been out of the city all the week, and when they wanted to know what parts he had visited and what people he had seen, he reminded them that he had heathens close at home, and they were to be found even in his own congregation. Ah, and there may be some heathens here. At any rate, there are plenty of heathens in this great city of London. I have no doubt there are parts of this metropolis in which hundreds, and even thousands, of people reside who are as ignorant of the plan of salvation as the inhabitants of Coomassie. They know nothing of Jesus, even though the light is so bright around them. "Declare his glory among the heathen," ye lovers of Christ. Penetrate into these dark places: break up fresh ground, Christian men and women. I am persuaded, and this is a matter I have often spoken of, that many of you who sit and hear sermons on the Sunday ought rather to turn out and preach the gospel. While we are glad to see you occupying pews, it will be a greater joy to miss you from your wonted seats, if we only know that you are declaring God's glory among the heathen. I am not sure that we are all of us right to be living cooped up in this little island of ours. There are in England enough disciples of Jesus to bear the gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth; but perhaps there is not one Christian in five or ten thousand who ever deliberately thinks about going to the heathen to make known to them the way of salvation, and to declare the glory of the Lord among those who have never heard his name. Pray

God there may yet come a wonderful wave of God's Spirit over our churches which shall bear upon its crest hundreds of ardent spirits resolved to carry the tidings of redemption to the jungle and the fever swamp, to the high latitudes and the southern islands. O that the love of Christ may constrain them. Know ye not that Christ has determined to save men by the preaching of the gospel? Has he not charged his disciples to go into all the world? How poorly has the church carried out the commission. If you do love Christ here is room to show your love; go and declare his glory among the heathen.

A third expression is used here. "Declare his wonders among all people." Our gospel is a gospel of wonders. It deals with wonderful sin in a wonderful way. It presents to us a wonderful Saviour, and tells us of his wonderful complex person. It points us to his wonderful atonement, and it takes the blackest sinner and makes him wonderfully clean. It makes him a new creature, and works a wonderful change in him. It conducts him to wonders of happiness and wonders of strength, and yet onward to greater wonders of light and life; for it opens up to him the wonders of the covenant. It gives him wonderful provisions, wonderful deliverances, and leads him right up by the name of him that is called Wonderful, to the gates of that wonder-land where we shall for ever

> "Sing, with wonder and surprise,
> His lovingkindness in the skies."

Surely, dear Christian friends, we ought to talk about the wonders of the Lord our God, and especially should

we dwell upon those wonders which we have seen ourselves. Of every Christian man it might be said that he is a wonder. Will you think a minute, Christian, of the wonder that God has made of you, and the wonders that he has done for you. "That ever I should be"—will you not say that?—"that ever I should be saved is a wonder of wonders." That you should have been kept till now, that you should not have been suffered to go back, that you should have been preserved under so many troubles, that your prayers should have been heard so continuously, that, notwithstanding your ill manners, the love of Christ should still have remained the same. Oh, but I cannot recite the tale of marvels: it is a long series of wonders. The Christian man's life, if the worldling could understand it, would seem to him like a romance. The wonders of grace far exceed the wonders of nature; and of all the miracles God himself has ever wrought there are no miracles so matchless in wonder as the miracles of grace in the heart of man. Beloved, declare these miracles, these wonders. Tell them to others; men like to hear a tale of wonder. They will gather round the fire at eventide when the logs are burning, and delightedly listen to the story of wonder. When you go home, young man, for your next holiday, if God has converted you, tell what great things the Lord has done for you. And when you go home, Mary, and see your mother, if the Lord has met with you, tell her what the Lord has done. Declare his wonders among all people. Do not be afraid of speaking about the gospel to anybody or in any company. Whoever they may be, whether they be rich or poor, high or low, if you get an opportunity

of declaring the wonders of God's grace, do not let the gospel be unknown for want of a tongue to tell it.

See you, then, I have put before you these two outlets for your love. There is song, and here is discourse. Go and use them both, and if any bid you hold your peace, shall I tell you the answer? Use the same answer which your Master did to the Pharisees when they complained of the shouts of the little children: "If these should hold their peace the very stones would cry out." Ordinary Christians may be quiet because God has done nothing very wonderful for them. They go through the world in a very ordinary kind of way. Their religion is about skin deep, and no more. But those that know they deserve the deepest hell, and have been saved by a mighty effort of infinite mercy, must tell what God has done for them. They must come out from the world, and be separate. They must be decided, zealous, and even enthusiastic. Necessity is laid upon them to be earnest and intense in all they do and in all they say. They cannot help it, for the love of Jesus will fire their souls with a passion that cannot be quenched. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not live henceforth to themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." God help you, beloved, thus to live.

As for those of you who have never found the Saviour, you cannot tell of his excellence or publish his worth, but I do trust that you will not forget that Jesus is to be found by those who seek him, and whosoever believeth on him shall be saved. Take him at his word. Rely on his promise. Trust him. Commit your soul

to him. Cast yourself unfeignedly and unreservedly on his mercy. He will not spurn you; but he will receive you graciously and you shall yet praise him, and he will be the health of your countenance and your God.

Lame Sheep.

"Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."—Hebrews xii. 13.

THERE are some believers of strong and vigorous faith. Soaring high, they mount up with wings as eagles. Fleet of foot, they can run and not be weary, or with steady progress they can walk, and not faint. But all are not so highly privileged. I suppose there is seldom a family which has no sickly member. However hale and hearty most of the sons and daughters may be, there is likely to be some weakly one amongst them. So it certainly is in the spiritual household; and it will be, therefore, my business just now to look after the weakly ones. I do trust that the word which I shall be enabled to speak may lead their companions to look after them, and may God grant that by these means many troubled ones may be conducted into peace and safety.

IN GOD'S FLOCK THERE ARE ALWAYS SOME LAME SHEEP.

There is a peril intimated here; "lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." This is only too likely to happen. The caution is applicable to every

church, however small the community of Christians may be. Lame sheep will commonly be found even in the tiniest flock. It will be necessary, then, to be tender of their infirmity. Some of these people of God who are compared to lame sheep, seem to have been so from their birth. It is in their constitution. Do you not know some friends of yours who naturally incline to despondency? They always take the dark view of everything, and if there be no dark side at all, they have a very fine imagination, and they very soon conjure up some difficulty or trouble. They appear to have been born with a propensity to read black-letter literature and nothing else. Illuminated missals are not for them. They cannot bear the fine colours, which delight our eyes. They like the dark points. If they turn to the Bible they seem naturally to fall upon the threatenings, or if they read the promises, they shake their heads, and say, "Ah, these are not for us." They make heavy troubles out of the common cares of life, and it is only carrying out the same spirit which causes them to grieve and fret over the whole course of their Christian pilgrimage. For them the road is always rugged, the pastures unsavoury, and the waters turbid. You will find such unhappy souls in all our churches; people who seem from their very conformation to be lame as to the matters of faith, timorous, trembling, and full of doubts and fears.

Besides, have you never noticed a constitutional tendency in some professors to stumble, and get lame? If there is a slough, they will fall into it: if there is a thicket, they will get entangled by it: if there is an error, they will run foul of it. Good people we trust

they are, and they do believe in Jesus, but somehow or other they do not see things clearly. Men to them are like walking trees. Such persons go off at a tangent if anybody makes noise enough to attract their ear. "Lo here and lo there" are cries at the sound of which they go off directly. Let a new divine discover a new doctrine, and they are on the new track at once, never mind where it leads to. Let a would-be philosopher suggest some fresh theory about *matter* which clashes with the word of God and the things of the Spirit, their eager appetite is whetted, and they will leave the old fields of truth to wander in the barren wastes of science, so called. When you go to market, if you are a sensible person, you do not turn aside from all the wares and produce of fair merchandise to waste your time and your money over the quack vendor of nostrums that he advertises with large pictures and loud talk. Your common sense directs you to seek wholesome food and useful articles. You would more than suspect the threadbare doctor. But there are credulous people just ready to be taken with any bait. So, too, there is no lack of simpletons in all our congregations, good thoughtless people, lame and limping in all their walk, troubled with scepticism, and plagued with curiosity, till they take best with that which is most pernicious. Unstable as water, they shall not excel.

Can you not detect, too, some who are lame in point of character? They seem to have been so from their very birth. There is a something about their gait that is unsteady. As you look at them you are ready to say, "Yes, good people they may be, but they are of a queer sort." We hope they are sincere, but

they are like Mephibosheth, who was dropped by his nurse, and was lame in both his feet. If they walk at all it is a dreadful hobble. They do their best, and we cannot condemn them, but there is an awkwardness about their deportment. They are lame sheep at the best. With some it is a cross temper; with others it is a general moroseness, which it does not seem as if the grace of God itself would ever cure in them; or it may be a natural indolence oppresses them; or it is quite possible that habitual impatience harasses them. Now, the grace of God should eradicate these vices; it can and will, if you yield to its influence; for the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. With some of us the conquest over such evil propensities has been already gained. Still there are among us those sheep who are lame in this particular respect: they are, if I may so say, constitutionally unsound from their very first entrance into the fold. Moreover, they betray their lameness when there is anything you give them to do. If they are Sunday-school teachers, they cannot walk regularly or keep step with their fellows; or they fail to help the young scholar on. Ask them to visit in any district, the steps they take are marked by indiscretion. Appoint them to preach at any of your stations, their speech is not straightforward; they go over the plainest ground of gospel statement with a lack of consistency like the walk of a man whose legs are not equal. Whatever they attempt, they do it just as a lame man would go on an errand. They are slow in their movements and slovenly in their performances. Aptly are they compared to lame sheep. Well, you know such.

I wonder whether you are one yourself; at least there are such about, lame from their birth.

Other sheep of Christ's flock are halt and lame because they have been ill-fed. Bad food is the cause of a thousand disorders. Many a sickly man, instead of being dosed with drugs needs to be nourished with wholesome meat. Had he something better to feed upon, he might conquer his diseases. Sheep cannot thrive well on bad food. It is true many really good Christians have been badly fed. The preaching they have heard has, perhaps, been altogether false doctrine. The poor souls have sat and listened to moral essays, maudlin sentiments, or manifold subtleties that could not nourish their faith or invigorate their spiritual constitution. If they sometimes suspected that it was not all right, they did not like to desert the place they had long been wont to attend, or to forsake the minister they had long been wont to hear. They are afraid of being thought too critical, so they have gone on with ill fare to the prejudice of their health and strength, their comfort, and usefulness. It is more than probable that poisonous doctrine has got into their constitution, and done them real mischief, hence they are lame. In hundreds, not to say thousands, of cases that I know, Christians are lame through a kind of hazy teaching, in which, if there is not anything positively bad, there is nothing positively good. I have read the remark that if you were to hear thirteen lectures on geology from any decent lecturer you would probably get a pretty clear idea of his system, but that you might hear thirteen hundred sermons from many a minister without knowing what he did believe. There is a systematic habit

now-a-days of keeping back the positive doctrines and the essential truths of the gospel; or of referring to them so vaguely that the sound of words gives no clue to the sense. The whole atmosphere is so full of fog that people cannot see where they are. The preacher would appear to be profoundly deep; but he is not clear. He stirs the mud, and makes himself and his subject alike obscure. Or, perhaps, he is so superficial that he does not touch upon those truths which lie at the foundation of the blessed hope of eternal life. Those that sit under such a ministry need not wonder how it is that they do not grow in grace. Ay, and how much ministry there is that has nothing but chaff in it. What else can we say of those exquisite preparations for the pulpit in which cuttings from the reviewers, cullings from the poets, and choice scraps from Scripture writers are woven together with a fine overture to begin, and a flowing peroration to finish? What can we say of it but chaff, chaff, without a grain of pure wheat from first to last! I should like to chain eloquence down to a post; there let it be bound for ever in the land of forgetfulness; never again let it lift its brazen face in this world. Aiming at oratory, cultivating rhetoric, the gospel, which eschews the words of man's wisdom and demands great plainness of speech, has been disparaged and displaced. We shall not get back a strong race of Christians till we get back such a sturdy band of outspoken men as dare their reputation, if not their lives, upon the unvarnished testimony they give to the truth they know, the truth as it is in Jesus; the truth as it burns in their own hearts, and fires their tongues; the truth as it commends

itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; bearing thus witness to this book with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. But, undoubtedly, there are thousands of Christians at this good hour who are lamed for life through unqualified, unhallowed teaching. God save us from its hateful witcheries and its baneful influences. If we have got to preach, let us preach; but for heaven's sake let us know what we have got to say, and let us say it as though we meant it, or for ever hold our tongues. There be some who seem to speak as if they meant to say nothing, and they succeed to their heart's content, if that is their intention; nothing comes of it. The children of God trained under their auspices do not know whether God has an elect people or not—whether the saints will persevere or whether they will fall away and perish—they do not know whether Christ redeemed everybody, or somebody. They have no clear notion whatsoever of the things which make for their peace. May we be preserved from all wilful ignorance and woeful infatuation. May God supply us constantly with strong meat and sound health to digest it. Full many of the Lord's sheep are lame because they have been worried. Sheep often get worried by a dog, and so they get lamed. It may be I am addressing some poor child of God who has been beset by Satan, the accuser of the brethren, and frightfully tormented. Oh what trouble and what terror he can inflict upon us! He can suggest the most infernal insinuations. He can inject into our minds such blasphemous thoughts as make us stagger and reel: he can make us breathe as it were the very atmosphere of the infernal lake. Those

that have passed through this bitter experience will know how they carry the marks of a conflict with Satan upon them, after they have once been assailed by him; wounds and scars that they will bear upon them to their grave. He is such a cruel adversary that even when we overcome him our strength is impaired by the battle. The fatigues and perils of our pilgrimage are light in comparison with our temptations. We had easier go a thousand miles over hedge and ditch than have to stand foot to foot with that dread adversary of souls for an hour. Full many a child of God has been lamed in that fray. Others, too, have been harassed by persecutors. Many a poor woman has lost her cheerful spirits through a harsh, ungodly husband, who has excited her fears or vexed her with sneers; and not a few dear young children have been broken down for life through the hard treatment they have had for conscience sake to endure at home. True, there may be instances in which sufferers of this sort out of weakness have been made strong, but for the most part when from day to day, from hour to hour, one is insulted and assaulted the trial is heavier than any ordinary fortitude can bear, insomuch that those who have encountered it have gone halting like lame sheep all their days.

Some precious saints I have known have grown lame through a rough and weary way, just as sheep can be lamed if they are driven too fast, or too far, or over too strong a ground. To what an excess of trouble some children of God have been exposed! The Lord has graciously helped them through all their adversities. Still the trouble they have had to endure has

told upon their hearts. They seem as if they never could quite recover from the sudden shock, or the protracted anxiety that has once impaired their strength, wrinkled their face, and dried up their moisture. If they had more grace no doubt they would recover their health and renew their youth, but there are some gentle spirits which when once crushed are unable to rally, therefore they remain lame.

Perhaps more still are lamed through the rough road of controversy. If you are a child of God, and you know your bearings, keep always as much as ever you can out of the jingle-jangle of controversy. Little good ever comes of your subtle disputations, but they do gender much strife. Do you tell me that we are told to "prove all things." Yes, so we are; and it is well to give heed to the admonition, but we are told also to "hold fast that which is good;" and we must not forget the latter half of the precept, while we give our whole attention to the former half. Some people seem to think that, in order to prove all things, they have to analyse and define every particular and every particle with scrupulous nicety. To prove the quality of the meat that is brought to your table there is no occasion for you to eat the whole joint. A small sample will enable you to pronounce a sound opinion. Apply the same rule to books, and it will save you a world of trouble. They may dish up old dogmas, or they may throw off new theories; they may contain the reveries of the thoughtful, or the ramblings of the idler; they may be conceived with a purpose, or composed for a price. In any case you must have a voracious appetite if you would read them all through. But it is quite unnecessary.

Take the paper knife and just cut open a page in the centre. One tasting will generally suffice for a fair testing. You can see within a little what tack their authors take. If they accord not with the Word of God, away with them! You have proved them quite enough. You'll get small thanks for great pains if you worry your poor mind to solve afresh the points which are settled among us. We have believed and rejoiced in the truth these many years. Yes, believed on conclusive evidence where we once stood in doubt; rejoiced with joy unspeakable where we once looked with dreary misgiving. What more can you require? But many have been lamed through choosing rough places, and adventuring among thorns and briers, and leaving the beaten tracks, without experience enough to avoid injury to themselves, or skill enough to clear a path in which others may safely follow.

Full many of the Lord's sheep have become lame through negligence, faintness, and the gradual declension of spiritual health. They have backslidden; they have been remiss in prayer, omitted reading the Word, and forsaken communion with God, so it is no marvel that their walk betrays their weakness. A bad cold is the parent of many bad ailments. Beware of catching a chill in religion. Lameness is not unfrequently the result of a fall. A broken bone, or a compound fracture, or a serious dislocation of the joints is not easily healed. Those who have such injuries can tell you how helpless it makes them; how long it is before they can walk without crutches; and how often a change of weather will remind them, by ache and twinge, that cures leave scars behind. Certainly it is

so with any man who has fallen into gross sin after making a profession of faith in Christ. However heartily he may be restored by divine grace, he will feel its effects as long as he lives. Like one who halts on his thigh, he will be more or less lame ever afterwards. That is a terrible text for backsliders—will you please all turn to it, open your Bibles, and make a mark against it (Isaiah xxii. 14): "*It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.*" Saddest, most sorrowful, of all the causes of lameness this which comes through a fall into any sin. Heaven spare us from turning aside to folly!

There are, and I suppose we may expect there always will be, lame ones in God's flock; *so I proceed to show that the rest of the flock should seek their healing.* "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Some Christian people seem to be so inconsiderate and unsympathising, that they treat all the lame of the flock with harshness. You may be strong and vigorous in your physical constitution, strangers to nervousness and depression of spirits. Be thankful, then, but do not be presumptuous. Despise not those who suffer from infirmities that have never come upon you. Your turn may come ere long. You are yet in the body, and exempt from no ailment to which your fellow-creatures are prone. I have known hectoring spirits whose contumely it was hard to quiet, so did they jeer at the weaklings; and presently their own complaints have been hard to pacify, so did they moan over their own

grievances. The more arrogant they have been, when all was well with them, the more crestfallen and desponding have they been in the gloom, when things have gone ill with them. Those fellows who crow most croak worst. There is a passage in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel which I should recommend every strong, rough man to read and diligently consider: "Thus saith the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle." Jehovah is our Shepherd, and he is very tender of his little lambs and his weak sheep: and if we are not tender of them too we shall soon be made to smart for our hard-heartedness. It sometimes happens that those persons who have seldom or never had an illness in their lives feel little sympathy for those who have to bear much pain and sickness. Others who have never suffered from poverty themselves will sometimes shut up their bowels of compassion against those who are in necessitous circumstances. Or if they dole out a charity they will too often spoil a good deed with a harsh word. "Ye that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak;" and if that is too much to expect of you, the least that I can ask is that you will bear with them. I do beseech you by the gentleness of Christ that ye tread lightly the sick chamber, and speak softly to such as are crushed by adversity. There are diseases that provoke irritability. Peevishness, or despondency,

may be symptoms of the particular ailment that prostrates one's energies and enervates one's entire being. Do not be censorious, that were cruel. Let those of you who are blessed with health, and walk in the sunshine, be considerate of their brethren and sisters who are blighted with a malady they cannot shake off or enveloped in a cloud that darkens all their prospects. Do learn to make another's case thine own. Be kind. Let every tone of your voice, every gesture of your limbs, every look of your face show the kindness of your heart. God will surely requite it. Are his children in the furnace, he watches them. If you aggrieve them in their trouble, he will vex you in his sore displeasure. And there are spiritual ailments which, like bodily ones, require tender care and gentle treatment. Do not aggravate the sorrows of those who are harassed with doubts, tempted with evils, and distracted with anxious cares. Their tale may appear simple enough to you, but it is very serious to them. What troubles them might not give you an instant's concern. Pass it not over, therefore, as nonsense. Your Lord and Master knew how to condescend to men of low estate; and his condescension was always pure, never arrogant. He is far more gentle than the tenderest among us. Oh, how desirable to learn his way!

DO YE ASK, THEN, WHAT HE SAYS WE ARE TO DO FOR THESE LAME ONES?

Evidently, we ought to comfort them. Lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. Cheer the hearts when the limbs are weak. Tell the doubting that God is faithful. Tell those that feel the burden of sin that it was for sinners Christ died.

Tell the backsliders that God never does cast away his people. Tell the desponding that the Lord delighteth in mercy. Tell the distracted the Lord doth devise means to bring back his banished. Covet the character of Barnabas. He was a son of consolation. Study the sacred art of speaking a word in season. Apprentice yourself to the Great Master. Learn the secrets of the trade. Acquaint yourself with the mystery of the guild. Let your own troubles and trials qualify you to sympathise and succour. You will be of great value in the church of God if you acquire the art of compassion, and are able to help those that are bowed down.

But will you please give heed to the special instruction. We are to make straight paths because of lame people. You cannot heal the man's bad foot, but you can pick all the stones out of the path that he has to pass over. You cannot give him a new leg, but you can make the road as smooth as possible. Let there be no unnecessary stumbling-blocks to cause him pain. Do you ask me how you can observe this precept? If you have to preach the gospel, preach it plainly. Poor sinners are dull enough of understanding; they can puzzle themselves, without your puzzling them. Had you to feed a child it would be folly to put a quartern loaf down before it and account your duty done. Nor will it profit the mass of the people to preach the gospel to them in the abstract, giving them a great lump of truth, to decipher and digest as best they can. No; but you should divide a child's bread into small pieces —crumble it up, and then pour the milk on it, that he may be able to feed on it. So must we cater for God's

tried and troubled people. We must speak simply, use homely illustrations, and quote precious promises. What though somebody may be offended. Well, let him take umbrage. We need not be particular to pacify any of those critical people, and God forbid that we should offend any of his little ones; for he is jealous of them. If one feeble soul gets a hold of the truth through its being made plain to him, he will be grateful to you; nor is "God unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love."

Would you make straight paths, then take care that your teaching is always according to the Bible. Many lame people have been injured by a mixture of heathenish philosophy and Christian doctrine. What is it that leads now-a-day to the spread of popery in this country? Whence this dogma of baptismal regeneration? Had every minister preached that believers only ought to be baptized, there would have been no pretext for infant sprinkling, and certainly no baptismal regeneration. If you go a little to the right. or a little to the left, and so diverge from the high road, you do not know where it will take you. Have you ever tried that in a Surrey lane? Perhaps you have been beguiled by some pleasant looking path to leave the main road, fully expecting to come back into it again a little further on, not for a moment supposing that you had changed your course altogether till you have found yourself two or three miles off the place that you wanted to get to. It is better for you always to keep to the Scriptures, friends, for if you go a little away from them you do not know where you may wander; and in teaching others you may lead them astray. Errors that seem slight and

frivolous at first become sad and serious in a little while. A little deviation from the Word of God will presently lead to a total dissent from its teaching. Heaven only knows how far you may go astray when you once begin to turn your feet aside. Make straight paths for your feet then, because there are lame ones that otherwise will be turned out of the way.

And, in all our walk and conversation let us make straight paths to our feet as those who aim at holiness of life. Unholy Christians are the plague of the church. They are spots in your feasts of charity. Like hidden rocks, they are the terror of navigators. It is hard to steer clear of them: and there is no telling what wrecks they may cause. The inconsistencies of professors spread dismay among weak, desponding believers. It is not merely the mischief you will do to yourself, church-member, if you grow wanton and worldly, or the grief you will bring to the stronger brethren; but it is the pain and peril to which you will expose the young, the weak, the tender ones of the flock. That poor little girl in yonder cottage will have your character thrown in her teeth; that poor struggling woman, whose godless husband she has sought to reclaim, will be sure to hear his cruel taunt, "Ah, there is one of your crew: that is how they live." The unclean life of anyone that happens to stand in an eminent place, does a damage which it is impossible for us to estimate. The jeer does not alight only upon the transgressor himself, but upon the whole company of God's people with whom he was associated; they all have to bear the taunt and feel the smart. Many a lame one is staggered. Were he a strong Christian, of

course he would say to himself, "Well, there was a Saul among the prophets and a Judas among the apostles, and there will be false professors among ourselves; so we must not pin our creed to any creature in the world." The less confidence he could repose in the disciples, the more closely he would cleave to the Lord. But timid, trembling Christians are put out of countenance and out of heart too by the delinquencies of those they were wont to look up to. They say, "What, and if a Christian man acts like this, can there be anything in Christianity worth seeking for and living for after all?" So the lame are put out of the way. Oh, do walk carefully! When you try to teach others, do make your walk an example to those you wish to teach. I would say this to myself especially. Let your life be so pure that it excites no suspicion; let your conduct be so upright that it needs no explanation or apology; let your character speak for itself, a light that shines, an example that you need not be ashamed of yourself, and such as others may wish to emulate. And beware, I pray you, of any secret sin; of any evil habits such as you would only tolerate when screened from observation; for, as sure as you live, if you are a child of God, it will come out one of these days, to your shame. The openly profane may enjoy a measure of impunity, but the professed follower of Christ never can play the hypocrite without provoking speedy retribution. Ah, David thought he had smuggled up his sin with Bathsheba, did he not? When he had compassed Uriah's death, he seems to have imagined that nobody would ever know anything about it. But how soon it was discovered, and that, too, without its being divulged by anyone who

connived at his guilt. The Lord saw it, and he would not hide it. Never let a child of God think that his Heavenly Father will overlook his wilful misdeeds. There is no special providence to shield you from eating the fruit of your own ways. Be sure your sin will find you out. "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way."

Once more let me admonish you. Do not be negligent when your Lord is so vigilant. Do not even be careless when you see him so cautious. The Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, evidently cares for the lame ones. The charge he gives is a proof of the concern he feels. He bids us to be considerate of them, because he himself takes a warm interest in their welfare.

WHAT NOW SHALL I SAY TO YOU WHO FEEL YOUR OWN WEAKNESS AND INFIRMITY? You lame ones who cannot walk without limping, I know how you complain. "Ah," say you, "I am no credit to Christianity. Though in all sincerity I do believe in Jesus, yet, alas, I can scarcely think I am one of his true disciples, called and chosen and faithful! I fear that after all he will disown me." Ah, beloved, that he never will. If you really are trusting to him, and hanging upon him, or even touching the hem of his garment, he cannot and he will not leave or forsake you. True, it would be likely enough if his ways were like our ways, for it will cause him no little care to get you safe home. When Mr. Greatheart went with Muchafraid and Feeblemind on the road to the celestial city, he had his hands full. He says of poor Mr. Feeblemind, that when he came to the lions, he said, "Oh, the lions will have me."

And he was afraid of the giants, and afraid of everything on the road. It caused Greatheart much trouble to get him on the road. It is so with you. Well, you must know that you are very troublesome and hard to manage. But then our good Lord is very patient; he does not mind taking trouble. He has laid down his life for you, and he is prepared to exercise all his divine power and wisdom to bring you home to his Father's house, If he were to desert you, there would be no eye to pity, no hand to lead you; but there is no fear of his changing the purpose of his heart. Having loved his own he loveth them to the end. Were the good Shepherd ever to neglect one of the flock, it would not be a lamb or a lame sheep. Were the dear Saviour to leave any one of his disciples, it would not be one of the little ones. I have heard say—I do not know how true it is—that when one of her family is a little weak-headed, the mother is sure to love that one best and show it the most attention. Her tenderest thoughts will always turn toward her helpless babe, and her keenest anxieties will hover over the child who is ill. She may forget awhile the strong and hale, but those who need her succour most are quite certain to be never out of her mind. Be of good cheer, then. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will the Lord comfort you. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

Thou mayest say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Thou mayest gratefully sing, "He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." In the divine economy the more care you

require the more care you shall have. Besides, you know somewhat of our blessed Redeemer's covenant engagements. Did our Lord Jesus Christ fail to bring his weak ones home it would be much to his dishonour. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept," he says, "and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." So Satan only had his own. How the wolf would howl over one sheep branded with the Saviour's name were he to fall a prey to his teeth! What malignant hilarity and derision there would be among the infernal spirits if the good Shepherd failed to bring home one lost sheep whom he had rescued! The joy among the angels of God, they would say, was premature. The Son of Man, they would say, had sought, found, but failed to save the lost. Then the weaker the victim the keener would the satire be. Ribald lips might shout forth the taunt, "He saved the healthy, the halt he could not save." It would thus be more discredit to Christ to lose a weak one than a strong one, or for one lame sheep to be lost than if some of the healthier of them should perish; but there is no danger of such a calamity. The oversight of the Shepherd secures the flock. They are all numbered, and each one in particular is known to him. Our Lord is a shepherd who loves his sheep so well, that were one of them taken and held between the jaws of a lion he would run to the rescue, and rend the lion as David did of old. He would slay the lion and the bear to get his poor little one saved from the teeth of the devourer. You shall not die, but live. "Oh," say you, "but I can hardly think it. How can I preserve myself?"

No, you cannot. In your weakness lies your great strength. Jesus Christ will be sure to cover you with his power, so than when you are utterly defenceless you shall be most efficiently defended. "Ah," says another, "I have had a weary life of it hitherto." Yes, but you have brighter days to come. Some of God's children after living in the joyous sunlight all their lives, as they draw near the closing scene, have felt much darkness and depression of spirits. This in no degree perils their security; they will wake up all right in the morning. But, then, others of God's children have passed most of their days under a cloud, till the gloom seemed to settle on their visage and obscure even the radiance of their hope; and yet when the hour of their departure was at hand the mists and fogs have all dispersed, light has streamed into their souls, and their sweet peace and sacred joy have been like an overflowing tide. The very ones that went limping and mourning, while they were on their pilgrimage, have played the man and displayed the faith of Christians most wondrously when the trial that they dreaded all their life long overtook them. Just as Ready-to-Halt left his crutches behind, they have begun to sing and rejoice when they were departing. Like clear shining after rain; like a brilliant sunset after a stormy day, at eventide it was light with them; and, methinks, it will be so with many of you. And as for thee, O child of sorrow, I am not unmindful of thy sighs. Do you tell me that your days have been spent in mourning, and full often you have wet your couch with tears? 'Tis true; but know this, you are not the only weeping one in the family—

"Oh! deem not they are bless'd alone
Whose lives a peaceful tenor keep;
The Power who pities man has shown
A blessing for the eyes that weep."

There are some flowers that must be grown in the shade. I believe God made and adapted them to flourish most in umbrageous spots. Some ferns never thrive so well as in some little corner of the brook where the damp continually washes them. Perhaps you are like one of those flowers or ferns, planted in a soil that suits your growth. Well, if it be so, murmur not at your lot. The gloom that hovers over you may help the peace of your heart. I have known women pure and pious, for whom the sunny scenes of life have had no charms; but their bright faces, their beaming eyes, and their benevolent hearts have shone with a beautiful brilliance as they have flitted about like angels in the chambers of the sick, the wards of the hospital, or among the couches of the wounded and the dying. Now, consider him who was the Man of Sorrows; but his spirit was not crushed. In the midst of dire distress he said, "Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." And, beloved, do not be unmindful of the comfort you may derive under any affliction, when you trace it to the will of God. If you suffer as an evil doer, if it is your own fault, the scourge that chastens you will invite no pity, and the conscience that reproaches you will aggravate your pain. If, on the other hand, you can trace the hand of the Lord in a cross or a calamity, your course is clear directly. It would be folly to repine; your wisdom is to resign yourself entirely to his will. Bear it

patiently, and God will reward thee plenteously. Thy prayer shall come up before him acceptably, and the answer shall come down speedily, when you would rather glorify the Lord than gratify yourself.

It is not for me to say what particular purpose there may be in the personal afflictions that any of the sons and daughters of our heavenly Father are called to bear; but I cannot help observing that the peaceable fruits of righteousness these tried ones put forth are very sweet and luscious. Let me appeal to your own selves. Have you not often proved the truth of those words of the psalmist, "Thou hast known my soul in adversity"? And is it not so, that the notice which the Lord has taken of you, and the care he has exercised over you have made you love him more tenderly than you ever did before? You could say with David, "Thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great." Oh, what prayer you have poured out when his chastening was upon you! Such unwonted prayer, I say, for if you will turn to the margin of your Bibles, in the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, at the seventeenth verse, you will find this *prayer* of the chastened is called "sweet speech." And truly it is sweet, and the love that prompts it is passing sweet to the Lord Jesus Christ. I marvel not that he lets you suffer so much when your suffering yields such rich perfume. Well, dear friends, when we get so choice a compensation now, what shall we receive hereafter? Surely in the ages to come the lowliest of worshippers shall sing the loudest, while heaven's resounding mansions ring with shouts of sovereign grace. Their soprano notes shall

rise above the angels' harps, and the full tide of human voices with a distinctness like this—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and *my* spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." The personal tribute of extraordinary love and gratitude shall thrill out its solo, and then blend with the general chorus. I have often wished for myself, and I daresay you have wished the same, that your voice might be loudest of the throng.

And now, to close, let us read our text again. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. *And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*" Do see to it that ye are not negligent of this ministry of love. Remember how high a reputation Job got in his day for the care he bestowed on those who were frail and infirm. Eliphaz the Temanite said of him, "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble hands." And do not forget the reproof which the Lord gave to the shepherds of Israel: "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost." Above all, consider the example of our Lord Jesus. His eye was always quick to spy out the lame, the blind, the halt; and his hand was always stretched out immediately for their relief. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." And if you and I, beloved, walk with

God and God be with us, our godliness will show itself in the pity we feel and the kindness we show to the feeble and the faulty, the cranky and the crippled.

The Lord bless these counsels to the strong, and these cordials to the weak; and may we all come to that blessed land where "the inhabitant shall not say I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" Amen.

Brief Life is here our Portion.

"The time is short."—1 Corinthians vii. 29.

THE text does not say that *time* is short. That were very true. Compared with eternity, time at the very longest is but as a point. But note what the text does say—"*The* time is short." It is the time of our life, the space of our opportunity, the little while we shall be upon the present stage of action, that is short. It is narrow and contracted, as the original implies: "Behold," saith the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as a hand-breath and mine age is as nothing before thee!" Brief is the season we have allotted to us, brethren, in which we can serve the Lord our God.

This is a truth which everybody believes, knows, and confesses. It is trite as a proverb on every tongue; yet how few of us act as if we believed it. We are conscious of the precariousness of other people's lives, but somehow or other we persuade ourselves that our own time is not quite as limited. We think we have "ample time and verge enough;" but we wonder that our neighbours can be so careless and prodigal of days and

years, for we observe the wrinkles on their face, and detect the grey hairs on their head, and perceive the auguries of death in their mien, and we doubt not they will soon have to render in their account. "All men think all men mortal but themselves" is a night-thought that may well startle us, as we rest from the business and the bustle, or the waste and wantonness of each receding day. Why hide ye from yourselves the waning of your own life-work, the weakening of your own strength, the weaving of your own shrouds? As a creature you are frail; as an inhabitant of the world you are exposed to casualties; as a man there is an appointed time for you on earth. You must pass off with the tide, you must be swept away with the generation. "The time is short." Ask the angel what he thinks of the life of a mortal, and he will tell you that he remembers when the first man was made, and since then the earth has been changing, ever changing its tenants. Peradventure he is baffled to recount the races that have come and gone, the sires that have given place to sons in countless succession. For a little while they floated on the current, then they sunk beneath the stream. At first they struggled on through centuries, after that they failed, any one of them, to attain a tenth of that pristine age. "Short-lived!" saith he, "they seem to me as leaves upon a tree, as insects on the earth, as flies in the air. Like the grass that flourisheth in the meadows, scarcely have I gazed upon them ere they are cut down, withered, and gone." Or if you never meet with an angel to interrogate him, talk familiarly with one of the trees of an ancient forest. Ask what it has seen, and, though it cannot speak in tones articulate, you can

lend it a tongue, and it will tell you that hundreds of years have passed, and history has accumulated, from the time when when it was an acorn, till the time when now it covers half an acre with its far-spreading foliage. Yes, the oak and elm can tell us that man is but an infant of to-day. Or would you rather take counsel of your fellow creatures, then ask the old man "whose wasting oil is spent, and whose hasty sand is ebbing to the last,"—ask him what he thinks of life. He will tell you that when he was a boy he thought he had a wealth of time before him. So heavily did the days hang on his hands that he played the hours away, and was glad when birthdays told of the years that were gone. His strong desire it was, and his panting ambition, to get loose from the moorings of childhood, and launch out into the great wide sea of turmoil and enterprise: but now he looks back on these seventy years, that have been gradually accumulating, as a dream. Through all the fitful stages of life's journey time present was always perplexing, it must be past before it is understood. Seems it not to him as yesterday when he left his father's roof to be an apprentice? He remembers it distinctly, and fondly tells you of some quaint thing that happened in those olden times. How short a while since the bells rang out his marriage-peal, and now his children have passed their childhood; and his children's children climb his knee, and call him "grandfather." Yet he remembers when, as it were but yesterday, he was himself a little child, and his grandsire clasped him to his bosom. My venerable friends, you will bear witness that I do not exaggerate; mine is not the language of hyperbole; it

is only the feeble expression of a forcible experience. You can realise more vividly than I can paint the sensation of looking back over the entire span of three score years and ten; which to the stripling appears a very long life, while to you it merely seems as a watch in the night. And yet, perhaps, there are among you some hoary veterans, some elderly matrons, who need to be reminded that the time is short. Present health and activity may tempt you to forget that nature in you stands on the verge of her confine. What if your frame be strong; what if the bloom still linger on your cheeks; you have nearly reached the goal, the allotted term that mortals cannot pass! I have seen fine days in autumn; the air as soft as balmy spring; but they gave no promise of another summer. I knew the season was too far advanced for winter to delay its approach much longer. So, too, my aged friend, be sure the hour of your departure is drawing near. Should five, or even ten years more be granted you, how quickly they must pass when seventy years bygone so rapidly have fled! The remnant of your days will surely cover little space when the whole compass of your life has stretched over so small an area. Be parsimonious of minutes now, though you may have been once prodigal of years. From the fag end of life you can have no spare time to parley and postpone; to resolve and trifle with resolutions: to waste and squander golden opportunities. "The time is short." But to estimate this oracle truly we may well turn from the cycles that angels have witnessed, the centuries that trees have flourished, and the seasons that have come and gone in the memory of our sires, to consider the

years of the right hand of the Most High. Inquire at the mouth of the Lord. Take counsel of the Eternal God. "*A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*" "*One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" "*He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.*" Oh sirs, what ephemera we are; what insects of the hour! Like the grass we spring up, like grass we are mowed down. Compared with the lifetime of the Eternal what is our life? Nay, there is no comparison; it is almost too insignificant for contrast. "*My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass: but thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance to all generations.*" I wish I had power to impress this truth on every heart. As I have not I shall try to point the moral it suggests, and pray that the Spirit of God may seal the instruction in every heart.

"THE TIME IS SHORT." *It warns; it suggests; it inspires; it alarms.*

IT WARNS. If ye knew the sterling worth of time ye would shrink from the smallest waste of so precious an article. Fools say that time is long, but only fools. They say that time is made for slaves. He alone is a free man who knows how properly to use his time; and he is a slave indeed who finds it slavery to pursue his calling with a good conscience, and serve his God with diligence, fidelity, and zeal. Knowing that "The time is short" you and I have not an hour to squander upon unprofitable amusements. All

amusements are necessarily a dissipation of strength and a misuse of time.

There are some diversions which afford a respite from the incessant strain of labour and anxiety, and are profitable to strengthen the mind and brace up the nerves. These are not only allowable, they are fit and proper. But while recreation is both needful and expedient to keep the mental and physical powers in working order, we can give no countenance to such gambols and gamblings as rather tend to enervate than to invigorate the constitution. Popular taste displays its own perverseness in seeking to extract pleasure from folly and vice. Fashion will lend its sanction to many a pastime that ill becomes any wise, rational, intelligent persons: but the Christian in his relaxations must be a Protestant, seeking healthy impulse and avoiding baneful stimulant. The time is short; we cannot afford to lose it in senseless talk, idle gossip, or domestic scandals. Nor can we afford to plan a round of empty frivolities to while away an afternoon or an evening, as the manner of some is. We shudder at your formal calls and punctilious visits. Our time is too precious to be thus frittered away. Well might Cotton Mather complain of the intrusion after a person had called to see him, as people will call on ministers, as though their time were of no importance. "I would sooner have given that man a handful of money," said he, "than that he should have thus wasted my time." You count it little to trespass on our minutes, but in so doing you may spoil our hours. Whether you think it or not, it is often distracting to be molested with trivial things in the midst of sacred engagements. We may be called from an absorbing

study, we may be rudely interrupted when our knees are bent and our heart is lifted up to God in intercession; we may have our minds hurried off from the weightiest matters to listen to the most frivolous observations. It is said of Henry Martin that he never wasted an hour. I wish the same could be said of us, that we wasted neither an hour of our own time, nor an hour of other people's time. Brethren, the time is too short to make a desire for friendly intercourse an excuse for frothy conversation. It requires no stretch of imagination to picture to yourselves two men who are both believers in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, and accounted faithful, meeting in a room, and greeting each other as friends. They will surely have something choice to talk about. All heaven is full of God's glory, and the earth is full of his riches. There is range enough for thought, for speech, for profitable converse. Listen awhile. One observes that the weather is very cold. "Yes," says the other, "I think the frost is still very sharp." There they stick. They have nothing further to say, till presently one of them resumes, "It will be rather slippery travelling to-night;" to which comes the reply, "I dare say many horses will fall down." And are these the men of whom Peter testifies that they are redeemed from a vain conversation, received by tradition from their fathers with the precious blood of Christ? Are these men who have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit? Is this the frivolity that becomes the heirs of heaven? So time is squandered, and the faculty of speech abused. There is an ancient prophecy which I should love to see fulfilled in modern history. In "David's Psalm of

Praise" (only one psalm is so entitled), he says, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power; to make known unto the sons of men his mighty acts and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." By such converse as that, beloved, ye might redeem the time in these evil days. But you are afraid of being charged with cant, or with pushing religion a little too far. Brethren, it is high time we had a little more cant, and did push religion a little farther than has been our wont; for golden opportunities are lost, profitable interchange of holy thought is lamentably neglected. In days of yore, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." Not much of this prevails now among professing Christians. Little enough is spoken worth men's hearing, much less worth God's hearing. And if he did hear it, instead of putting it down in "a book of remembrance" and saying, "They shall be mine," surely in his infinite mercy he would forbear to record and blot out of memory the vain thoughts and vacant words which could only be a stigma upon their characters. By the brevity of time, then, and by the rapidity of its flight, I admonish you to refrain from all abuses of the tongue. Do invest each hour in some profitable manner, that when past it may not be lost. Let your lips be a fountain from which all streams that flow shall savour of grace and goodness.

The time, moreover, is much too short for indecision and vacillation. Your resolving and retracting, your planning and scheming, your sleeping and dreaming,

your starting up from slumber only to sink down into a drowsier state than before, are a mockery of life, and a wilful murder of time. Of how many of you is it true that if ever you did entertain a noble purpose you never found a convenient season to follow it out. On the verge of conversion sometimes, you have halted till your convictions have grown cool. Ten or twenty years ago you listened to the appeal, "My son, give me thy heart"; and you answered, "I will"; but to this day you have never fulfilled your work. "Go work in my vineyard," said the Master. "I go, sir," was your prompt reply. Yet you have never been. To-day, as aforetime, you stand idling. Some of you, indeed were, thirty or forty years ago, in a more hopeful condition than you are at present. What account can you give of yourselves? What has become of those intervening years? The infinite mercy of God has kept you out of hell, but there is no guarantee that his longsuffering will shield you from destruction another instant. Oh, sirs, the time is short, the business urgent, the crisis imminent. 'Tis very madness to be hectoring, hesitating, and halting between two opinions. Your vote, sir, before the poll closes. If God be God, serve him. Decide quick, speak sharp. If not, take the alternative,—serve Baal. Let your mind be made up without another moment's delay. How long, how long halt ye—ah! how long will ye have to halt between two opinions? And you Christian people, with your grand illusive projects, how they melt away! Some of you would have done a great deal that is useful by now if you had not dreamed of doing so much that is imposing. Oh, what wonderful plans for evangelising

London, for converting the whole continent of Europe to Christ float in the brain, evaporate in a speech, and nothing is done. We are like the King of Russia of olden times, who always wanted to take a second step before he took the first. We are always projecting some wonderful scheme that proves too wonderful ever to be carried out. So we dream of what ought to be and should be, of what might be, and as we hope may be. Such "dreams are the children of an idle brain." The dreamers grow listless, and nothing is done. In the name of the eternal God, I beseech you, if you love him, rise up and get to work. Better slay a single enemy than dream of slaughtering an army. Better that you sow a single grain of corn, or plant a single blade of grass, than dream about fertilising the Sahara, or reclaiming from the mighty sea untold acres of fertile land. Do something, sirs, do something. It is high time to awake out of sleep, for the time is short.

"The time is short." This may serve to warn us against another folly; that of speculating upon nice points of controversial theology. You know how the school-men used to debate and wrangle, clash, and divide in feuds and factions. Fain would they solve the query how many angels could stand on the point of a needle, and with many a proposition no less sophistical or absurd would they weary themselves. Strangely indeed was the ingenuity of men taxed to find subjects for discussion in the dark days of those dull doctors of learning. There is a little of the spirit abroad now. Ministers will devote whole sermons to the discussion of some crotchet or quibble that does not signify the

turn of a hair practically to anybody in the universe. I have generally noticed that the less important the point is, the more savagely will some persons defend it, as if the world might go to rack and ruin, and all the sinners in it go blindfold to perdition, and the work of salvation must stand still to have this point discussed. One brother, who meets me occasionally, can never be five minutes in my company, but what he attacks me upon the question of free agency and predestination; and I told him the last time I saw him, that I would have it out with him one of these days, but I must defer it till after the day of judgment, for I was too busy to talk to him about that just now. And I do feel so about a great many questions. There are brethren who can fully explain the book of Revelation, though I generally find that they exclaim one against the other, till they declaim each other off the face of the earth. But I would sooner be able to proclaim the cross of Christ, and explain the gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, than decipher the imagery of Ezekiel, or the symbols of the Apocalypse. Blessed is he who can expound the mysteries. I have not any doubt about his blessedness; but I am perfectly satisfied with another blessedness, namely, if I can bring sinners to Jesus, and teach the saints some practical truths which may guide them in daily life. It seems to me the time is much too short to go up in a balloon with speculations, or to go down into the mines of profound thought, to bring up some odds and ends and scraps of singular knowledge. We want to save souls, and conduct them to that heaven where God unfolds his presence and shines eternal day. This seems to me to be the pressing

demand upon us now that the time is short, and the night cometh when "no man can work."

The time is short; let this admonish us, brethren, to singleness of purpose. We must have only one aim. Had we plenty of time, we might try two or three schemes at once, though even then we should most probably fail for want of concentrating our energies; but as we have very little time, we had better economise it by attending to one thing. The man that devotes all his thought and all his strength to the accomplishment of one reasonable object is generally successful. My soul, bend thyself down, and lay thyself out for the glory of God. Be this the one aim of thy entire being. Form your friendships and order your occupations so as to fulfil this first highest duty of life. Be it your one sole motive to live for his honour, and, if necessary, even to die to promote his renown among the sons of men. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Attune your souls to the great Hallelujah—"While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being; Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord; Bless thou the Lord, O my soul." Oh, my brethren! this sublime enthusiasm will work wonders. In vain you dissipate your strength and fritter away your opportunities by dividing your attention. You want to be a Christian; meanwhile your heart is set upon getting riches. You would store your mind with the learning and wisdom of the world, you wish to gain repute as a good talker in company and a convivial guest at the social board. Ambition prompts you to seek fame among your fellows. Very well, I shall not denounce any one of these things, but I would

use every persuasive to induce you who are believers in Christ to renounce the world. If Christ has bought you with his blood, and redeemed you from this present evil world, he has henceforth a claim on you as his servant, and it is at your peril you take up with any pursuits that are inconsistent with a full surrender of yourself and your service to him. You belong to him; live wholly to him. The reason why the majority of Christians never attain to any eminence in the divine life is because they let the floods of their life run away in a dozen little, trickling rivulets, whereas if they cooped them up into one channel, and sent that one stream rolling on to the glory of God, there would be such a force and power about their character, their thoughts, their efforts, and their actions, that they would "live while they lived."

"THE TIME IS SHORT." THIS SUGGESTS. Do you know what reflection this fact suggested to me? Surely, then, thought I, I have some opportunity to follow out the work of faith, the patience of hope and the labour of love, though not the opportunity I once had. Then picturing to myself an ideal of a short life all used, nothing wasted, all consecrated, nothing profaned, I seemed to see a little child, a little boy giving his young heart to Christ. I saw the lad believing in Jesus while yet beneath his father's roof and under his mother's care. No sooner saved himself than he began at once to serve God after a boy's way, and still increasing in intelligence and energy as a stripling, and afterwards as a young man, from the very first he devoted himself with all the intensity of his being. So diligent and persevering was he that he lost no time.

So jealously did he watch his own heart, and so far was he from falling into sin, that there were no dreary intervals spent in wandering and retracing his steps in backsliding and repenting of the evil, in getting lukewarm and rekindling former ardour. With my mind's eye I followed that young man living a holy life through a succession of years, getting up to the highest possible platform of spirituality, and keeping there, and all the while blessed with such abundance of the graces and gifts of the Spirit of God as should make him bring forth much fruit to the glory of the Father, do much for the honour of Jesus, prove a great blessing to the church, bear a rich testimony to the world, and diffuse saving benefits to the souls of men. This was my ideal of a vessel fit for the Master's use. I lingered lovingly upon it. The child became a man. His life was brief. It was soon over. Our days on earth are a shadow; but they may happily be radiant as they pass and leave a trail of light behind. Might not, then, God himself from his eternal dwelling-place look down on the transient career I have sketched with a measure of admiration? The slender threads of fleeting moments are worked up into the goodly fabric of a complete biography. Endowed with one talent—TIME—and that endowment sparse! The gift so prized as to be economised; so looked after that it is never squandered; so usefully employed that its judicious expenditure can never be vainly regretted: so profitably invested that the faithful steward welcomes the advent of his Lord, ready and anxious to give an account. This is as I would wish to be. Some of you that are unconverted can never hope to receive the greeting that awaits such

a faithful servant. You have lost the golden opportunity. You have sunk your patrimony in riotous living. But are there not children here to whom this is possible, and youths who might convert my day-dream into a narrative? Oh for men and women with one ambition and one enterprise, to glorify the Lord. Ardently do I desire that God should be glorified in me, and that not in a small measure. I have prayed and I do pray him to make the most he can make of me—to do it anyhow. What if to this end I must be cast into the furnace of affliction and suffer for his sake! What if my honour should be trampled in the dust and my name become a hissing and a by-word, and a reproach among the sons of men, while the witness of my integrity is on high? Here am I, O Lord, to do aught, to bear aught that thou shalt bid. Only do get as much glory to thine own name as can be out of such a poor creature as I am. Who will join me in this petition? Vows made in our own strength are vain. But I solemnly charge each Christian young man to foster this aspiration. In the name of him who has redeemed you with his blood, gird up the loins of your mind. Survey the course you have to run. Prepare for the good fight of faith, in which you are to engage. Live to the utmost possible consecration of your entire manhood in its triple nature—spirit, soul, and body. Yield yourself up unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not stop to parley. The time is short. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

"THE TIME IS SHORT." THIS INSPIRES US. It

ought to fire us with zeal for immediate action. The sun posts on, the sands run down. Now is the accepted time. Let those who love the Lord be prompt. The time to do the deeds that thou must do, or leave them undone, flies swiftly past. Be quick. Say not I will do this by-and-by. Dispatch it at once. Other duties await thee. Brief is the space allotted thee for all. Are your children converted? Pray with them to-night. Let not to-morrow go without putting your arms about their necks, and kneeling down with them devoutly, and praying fervently that God would save their souls. It is the King's business; it demands haste. "The time is short" for others as well as yourself. A dear brother told me a week or two ago that a man who worked for him frequently brought in goods when they were finished, and he thought that next time the man came in he would speak to him about his soul. When he came, however, business absorbed the employer's attention, and the man passed away. He felt, he did not know exactly why, pricked in his conscience, and resolved that, as he came twice-a-week, on the next occasion he would inquire as to his eternal interests; but it was too late. Instead of coming again a messenger brought tidings that he was dead. Startled by the news, he could find no comfort in regrets, though he bewailed as one who could not forgive himself a hundred wasted opportunities in the presence of one keen self-reproach. Oh that an inspiration would constrain you to serve the Lord now! While you are meditating a fine chance some day you are making a foul mess at this hour. Every time the clock ticks it seems to say "now." The time is so

short that the matter is urgent. Do not wait, young man, to preach Jesus till you have had more instruction. Begin at once. You that mean to do something for the poor of London when you have hoarded up some more money, spend your money now; do it at once. You that mean to leave a large sum to charities when you die, defer it not. Be your own executors. Lay out the capital at once: get some joy and comfort in seeing how it is done. Now is the time to carry a good purpose to good effect. Before you were saved the message to you was, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." After you are saved the message to you is, "To-day obey his voice, and serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength." "The time is short." Make the most of it.

"The time is short." I want to ring this sentence louder and louder into your ears. Oh let it inspire you to pray for immediate conversions. I rejoice to know that our beloved friends, Messrs. Moody and Sankey, are coming to London to work for Christ. God grant success to all their labours. May they gather in hundreds of thousands of souls. But I have been pained to meet with some who are expecting to get converted when they come. Is not such procrastination perilous? Dare any of you run the risk of living till then? Will you wilfully abide in wicked unbelief for a single hour? Can you brook the thought of remaining month after month in jeopardy of your soul? Is it safe to tempt the Lord and provoke the anger of the Most High? Oh sirs, while you flatter yourselves with pleasing prospects you are beguiling your

hearts with a reckless presumption! We want you to be converted, and no time can be more suitable than this present time. Forsake your sin immediately. Do not turn back to dally with it a little longer. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lay hold on the promise of eternal life without any more ado. You may never see another morrow, or the desire that whets your appetite now may fail you then. This is our prayer, that you may now be brought into the fold of Christ before the year closes, before the sun sets, before the Sabbath ends.

But there are other considerations. Seeing the time is short, let us bear with patience the ills that vex us. Are we very poor? The time is short. Does the bitter cold pierce through our scanty garments? The time is short. Is consumption beginning to prey on our trembling frame? The time is short. Are we unkindly treated by our kinsfolk? Do our comrades revile, and our neighbours mock us? The time is short. Have we to bear evil treatment from an ungenerous world? The time is short. Come there cruel taunts to try our tempers? The time is short. The train is in motion. We are travelling at express speed. We shall soon be beyond the reach of all the incidents and accidents that disturb and distract us. As we travel home to our Father's house the distance diminishes, and we begin to sight the city of the blessed, till we think of "*the home over there.*" "The time is short." It is needless to murmur or repine, Why trouble yourselves about what you will do a month or two hence? You will probably not be here; you will be in heaven. Your eyes will have "beheld

the King in his beauty; you will have seen the land that is very far off," for "The time is short."

> "The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;
> So smooth it with hope and cheer it with song."

Worldly-mindedness ill becomes us who have confessed that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The time is short in which we can hold any possessions in this terrestrial sphere. Then let us not love anything here below too fondly. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Survey your broad acres, but remember you will not long be able to walk across them. Look on your plenteous crops, but ere long another shall reap the profit of those fields. Count your gold and silver, but know that wealth, greedily as it is sought, will not give you present immunity from sickness and sorrow, neither will it secure your welfare when called to quit your frail tenement. Trust in the living God. Love the Lord, and let eternal things absorb your thoughts and engage your affections. "The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Are these gloomy reflections? Nay, dear brethren, the fact that the time is short should inspire us who are of the household of faith with the most joyous expectations. Do you really believe in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Do you really believe it—that your head is to wear a

crown of life that fadeth not away? Do you really believe it—that these feet of yours, all shod with silver sandals, will stand upon that street of pure transparent gold? Do you really believe it—that these hands shall pluck celestial fruits from trees whose leaves can never wither, and that you shall lie down in the spice-beds in the gardens of the blessed? Do you believe it—that these eyes shall see the King in that day when he comes in his glory, and that these bones shall rise again from the grave, and your bodies shall be endowed with an incorruptible existence? "Yes," say you, "we do believe it, and believe it intensely too." Well, then, I would that ye realised the reality as so near, so very near, that you were waiting expectant of its fulfilment. Who would cry and fret about the passing troubles of a day when he saw the heavens open, beheld the beckoning hand, and heard the voice that called him hence. Oh that the glory might come streaming into your soul till you forget the darkness of the way! Oh that the breeze from these goodly mountains would fan you! Oh that the spray from that mighty ocean would refresh you! Oh that the music of those bells of heaven in yonder turrets would enliven you! Then would ye speed your way towards the rest that remaineth for the people of God, inspired with sacred ardour and dauntless courage. But the ungodly are not so. It is to them I must address the last word, "The time is short." *This alarms us;* and well indeed it may on their account. Let me toll a knell. It is a dismal knell I have to toll for the unconverted man, to whom life has been a joy, for he has prospered in the world. You have got it at last. You

have succeeded in the enterprise on which you set your heart. You have bought the estate that you longed to secure. It is a fine place certainly; but you have only got it for a short term, sir—two or three years! Would you have taken in on that term? "Oh, not I," say you, "I would not have taken it at nine hundred and ninety-nine years lease. Freeholds for me! Freeholds for me! Nothing short of a freehold!" Did I say three years? Nay, there is not a man beneath the sun that can guarantee that you will hold it three weeks. "The time is short." Drive down the broad avenue; walk round the park; look into the old feudal mansion; but the time is short, very short, and your tenure very limited. You have spread your canvas, you have plied your sinews, you have exacted the utmost of your brains, and you have gained your object. You are possessed of real property. It is *bonâ fide*. What next? Why, make your will. The thing is urgent. The time is short. But what have you not done? You have not believed in Christ. You have not embraced the gospel. You have not found salvation. You have not laid hold on eternal life. You have not a hope to solace you when your strength fails and you pant for breath. How few the opportunities that remain! I look back twenty years of my life and I see my weekly sermons bound in twenty volumes. I can hardly realise the fact that I have been preaching for twenty years. Some of you have attended my ministry all the while. Another year has almost ended; another volume has just accumulated. Well, not many of you will hear another twenty years' sermons. This is not a wild conjecture. The statistics of mortality reduce

contingencies and result in certainty. Among this mass of people we may positively predict the speedy exit of a certain proportion, and the resistless force, like wave o'er wave, will soon bear us away—

"And am I born to die,
To lay this body down?
And must my trembling spirit fly
Into a world unknown?

"Soon as from earth I go,
What will become of me?
Eternal happiness or woe
Must then my portion be."

Run your chance, careless, callous, void of conscience. It comes at length. You ail a little, your trifling indisposition does not yield to treatment. The symptoms grow serious. The disease is dangerous. Your death is imminent. Pain unnerves you. Terror distracts you. Your family, your friends look at you with helpless pity. The doctor has just left you in dismay. Send for the priest or fetch the parson. But what can they do for you unless you believe in Jesus? 'Tis over, the last struggle! Then picture yourself to yourself—a lost spirit, asking for a drop of water to cool its tongue! That will be your portion, sinner, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Bethink you, sirs; what a short step there is between you and death. What a short step between you and hell, unless you are delivered by a great ransom. Do you still imagine that there is time enough and to spare. I beseech you, do not cherish so vain a thought. It may be you suspect me of exaggerating. That I cannot do.

Time is still rushing on, swift but silent. While we speak the minutes pass, the hour is soon gone, the day is almost spent. I charge you, then, by the Ever Blessed, now listen to the warning; escape from sin; get out of that broad road which leads to destruction; believe in Jesus; lay hold on eternal life. May the Spirit of God arouse you. May these words be blessed to you. They should be put more forcibly if I knew how. With all the fervour of my soul I entreat you, for I know your everlasting interests are in imminent jeopardy. God grant you may not linger longer, lest haply you linger too long, and perish in your lingering. "The time is short."

In a little while there will be a concourse of persons in the streets. Methinks I hear some one enquiring, "What are all these people waiting for?" "Do you not know? He is to be buried to-day." "And who is that?" "It is Spurgeon." "What! the man that preached at the Tabernacle?" "Yes; he is to be buried to-day." That will happen very soon. And when you see my coffin carried to the silent grave, I should like every one of you, whether converted or not, to be constrained to say, "He did earnestly urge us in plain and simple language not to put off the consideration of eternal things. He did entreat us to look to Christ. Now he is gone, our blood is not at his door if we perish." God grant that you may not have to bear the bitter reproach of your own conscience. But as I feel the time is short, I will stir you up so long as I am in this Tabernacle; and I do pray the Lord to bless the word every time we preach it from this platform. Oh, that some souls may be saved, that Jesus

Christ may be glorified, Satan defeated, and heaven filled with saved ones.

"'Tis not for man to trifle. Life is brief
And sin is here.
An age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours;
All must be earnest in a world like ours.

"Not *many* lives, but only *one*, have we—
Frail, fleeting man;
How sacred should that one life ever be—
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil."

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